THE LIFE OF DANTE

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THE OXFORD BIOGRAPHIES

DANTE ALIGHIERI

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BRONZE BUST OF DANTE AT NAPLES

DANTE ALIGHIERI

BY

PAGET TOYNBEE
M.A., D.LITT., OXON.

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THIS little book lays no claim to originality, and makes no pretence to learning or research. It is addressed rather to the so-called general reader than to the serious Dante student. The narrative is taken largely from the pages of Villani, Boccaccio, and from other similar sources. The reader will find fiction (at any rate from the critic's point of view) as well as fact in these pages, but he will, I hope, be at no loss to distinguish between the two. The legends and traditions which hang around the name of a great personality are a not unimportant element in his biography, and may sometimes serve to place him as well as, if not better than, the more sober estimates of the serious historian. I have not, therefore, thought it outside the scope of this sketch of Dante's life to include some of the anecdotes which at an early date began to be associated with his name, though certain of them demonstrably belong to a far earlier period.

Again, when a thing has been well said by a previous writer, I have been content to let him

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speak, instead of saying the same thing less well in my own words.

The translations for the most part are my own. I have, however, been indebted for an occasional turn or phrase to Selfe and Wicksteed's *Selections from Villani*, and to the latter's versions of the *Early Lives of Dante*.

The illustrations are reproduced, by permission, from photographs by Messrs. Alinari and Messrs. Brogi of Florence.

May 1900

A THIRD edition of this book having been called for, I have availed myself of the opportunity to correct sundry misprints, and to rectify a few omissions, as well as to supplement the index, and the bibliographical and biographical notes in the Appendix, which were added in the second edition.

PAGET TOYNBEE.

September 14, 1904.
In obitu Dantis Florentini.

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FLORENCE AND THE ARNO

PART I

GUELFS AND GHIBELLINES

CHAPTER I

1215–1250

Origin of the names—Distinguishing principles of the two parties in Italy—Introduction of the parties into Florence—The Ghibellines with the aid of Frederick II. expel the Guelfs from Florence—Return of the Guelfs after the Emperor's death, and pacification between the two parties.

NORTHERN ITALY in the middle of the thirteenth century, at the time of Dante's birth,[1] was divided into two great political parties, of which the one, known by the name of Guelfs, looked to the Pope as their head, while the others, the Ghibellines, looked to the Emperor. The distinctive titles of these two parties were of German origin, being merely Italianised forms

[1] May 1265.

(*Guelfo* and *Ghibellino*) of the two German names *Welf* and *Weiblingen*. The former of these was the name of an illustrious family, several members of which had successively been Dukes of Bavaria in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The heiress of the last of these intermarried with a younger son of the house of Este; and from them sprang a second line of Guelfs, from whom the royal house of Brunswick is descended.

Weiblingen was the name of a castle in Franconia, belonging to Conrad the Salic, who was Emperor from 1024 to 1039, and was the progenitor, through the female line, of the Swabian emperors. By the election of Lothair in 1125 in succession to Henry v. (Emperor from 1106 to 1125) the Swabian family were ousted from what they had come to regard almost as an hereditary possession; and at this time a hostility appears to have commenced between them and the house of Welf, who were nearly related to Lothair. In 1071 the Emperor Henry IV. had conferred the Duchy of Bavaria upon the Welfs; and in 1080 the Duchy of Swabia had been conferred upon the Counts of Hohenstaufen, who represented the Franconian line.

The accession in 1138 of Conrad III. of Swabia to the Imperial throne, and the rebellion of Henry the Proud, the Welf Duke of Bavaria, gave rise to a bloody struggle between the two houses; and at

the battle of Weinsberg, fought on December 21, 1140, in which the Welf Duke was defeated by Conrad, the names *Welf* and *Weiblingen* were for the first time, it is said, adopted as war-cries.

These names, which in Germany, as we have seen, distinguished the two sides in the conflict between the Welfs and the Imperial Swabian or Hohenstaufen line, in Italy acquired a different meaning, and became identified respectively with the supporters of the Church and the supporters of the Empire. Their first appearance in Italy seems to have been quite at the beginning of the thirteenth century, when they were adopted by the two leading parties which divided the towns of Lombardy during the struggle for the Imperial throne between Philip, Duke of Swabia (brother of the Emperor Henry VI.), and the Welf Otto of Brunswick, many important Italian towns sympathising with the latter, who after his rival's death in 1208 became Emperor as Otto IV.

The division between the opposing factions rapidly deepened, till not only rival towns, but also the leading families within the towns themselves, became involved in party strife, the citizens ranging themselves, ostensibly at least, under the chiefs on either side.

The main outlines of the principles which actuated the two parties in Italy, during the period covered by this book, have been ably

sketched by the late Dean Church. "The names of Guelf and Ghibelline," he writes, "were the inheritance of a contest which, in its original meaning, had been long over. The old struggle between the priesthood and the Empire was still kept up traditionally, but its ideas and interests were changed. It had passed over from the mixed region of the spiritual and temporal into the purely political. The cause of the Popes was that of the independence of Italy — the freedom and alliance of the great cities of the north, and the dependence of the centre and south on the Roman See. To keep the Emperor out of Italy, to create a barrier of powerful cities against him south of the Alps, to form behind themselves a compact territory, rich, removed from the first burst of invasion, and maintaining a strong body of interested feudatories, had now become the great object of the Popes. The two parties did not care to keep in view principles which their chiefs had lost sight of. The Emperor and the Pope were both real powers, able to protect and assist; and they divided between them those who required protection and assistance. Geographical position, the rivalry of neighbourhood, family tradition, private feuds, and above all private interest, were the main causes which assigned cities, families, and individuals to the Ghibelline or Guelf party. One

party called themselves the Emperor's liegemen, and their watchword was authority and law; the other side were the liegemen of Holy Church, and their cry was liberty; and the distinction as a broad one is true. But a democracy would become Ghibelline, without scruple, if its neighbour town was Guelf; and among the Guelf liegemen of the Church and liberty the pride of blood and love of power were not a whit inferior to that of their opponents.

"The Ghibellines as a body reflected the worldliness, the licence, the irreligion, the reckless selfishness, the daring insolence, and at the same time the gaiety and pomp, the princely magnificence and generosity and largeness of mind of the house of Swabia; they were the men of the court and camp, imperious and haughty from ancient lineage, or the Imperial cause, yet not wanting in the frankness and courtesy of nobility; careless of public opinion and public rights, but not dead to the grandeur of public objects and public services. The Guelfs, on the other hand, were the party of the middle classes; they rose out of and held to the people; they were strong by their compactness, their organisation in cities, their commercial relations and interests, their command of money. Further, they were professedly the party of strictness and religion, a profession which fettered them as little as their

opponents were fettered by the respect they claimed for Imperial law. But though by personal unscrupulousness and selfishness, and in instances of public vengeance, they sinned as deeply as the Ghibellines, they stood far more committed as a party to a public meaning and purpose—to improvement in law and the condition of the poor, to a protest against the insolence of the strong, to the encouragement of industry. The genuine Guelf spirit was austere, frugal, independent, earnest, religious, fond of its home and Church, and of those celebrations which bound together Church and home; but withal very proud, very intolerant; in its higher form intolerant of evil, but intolerant always to whatever displeased it."[1]

"Speaking generally," as another writer[2] puts it, "the Ghibellines were the party of the Emperor, and the Guelfs the party of the Pope: the Ghibellines were on the side of authority, or sometimes of oppression; the Guelfs were on the side of liberty and self-government. Again, the Ghibellines were the supporters of an universal Empire, of which Italy was to be the head; the Guelfs were on the side of national life and national individuality."

The introduction of the Guelf and Ghibelline factions into Florence is said by the old Florentine

[1] *Dante: An Essay.* By R. W. Church.

[2] O. Browning, in *Guelfs and Ghibellines.*

chroniclers to have taken place in the year 1215, on the occasion of a blood-feud which arose out of the murder of one of the Buondelmonti by one of the Amidei, both of them noble Florentine families, on Easter Sunday in that year. The story of this murder, and of the incident which led to it, is related as follows by Giovanni Villani in his *New Chronicle of the City of Florence*, which he began to write in 1300, the year of the first Jubilee of the Roman Church.

"In the year of Christ 1215," he says, "Messer Gherardo Orlandi being Podestà of Florence,[1] one Messer Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti, a noble citizen of Florence, having promised to take to wife a damsel of the house of the Amidei, honourable and noble citizens; as the said M. Buondelmonte, who was a very handsome and fine cavalier, was riding through the city, a lady of the house of the Donati called to him, and found fault with him on account of the lady to whom he had betrothed himself, as being neither fair enough nor a fitting match for him, and saying: I had kept my daughter here for you—whom she showed to him, and she was very beautiful. And

[1] The Podestà was the chief magistrate of the city, who was appointed for one year. With a view to securing impartiality in the administration of justice the office of Podestà was always held by a stranger—never by a native of Florence.

he straightway, at the prompting of the Evil One, becoming enamoured of her, was betrothed to her and took her to wife; for which cause the kinsfolk of the lady to whom he was first betrothed, being assembled together and smarting under the shame which M. Buondelmonte had put upon them, were filled with the accursed rage, whereby the city of Florence was laid waste and divided against herself; for many families of the nobles swore together to put shame on the said M. Buondelmonte in revenge for these wrongs. And as they were in council among themselves as to how they should retaliate on him, either by beating him or by stabbing him, Mosca de' Lamberti spoke the evil word: A thing done has an end—that is, that he should be slain. And so it was done; for on the morning of Easter Day they assembled in the house of the Amidei of Santo Stefano, and M. Buondelmonte coming from beyond Arno, bravely arrayed in new garments all white, and on a white palfrey, when he reached the foot of the Ponte Vecchio on this side, just at the foot of the pillar where stood the statue of Mars, the said M. Buondelmonte was thrown from his horse on to the ground by Schiatta degli Uberti, and set on and stabbed by Mosca Lamberti and Lambertuccio degli Amidei, and his throat cut by Oderigo Fifanti, and an end made of him; and with them was

one of the Counts of Gangalandi. On these doings the city rushed to arms in tumult; and this death of M. Buondelmonte was the cause and beginning of the accursed Guelf and Ghibelline parties in Florence, albeit that before this time there had been many factions among the nobles of the city, and parties as aforesaid, by reason of the quarrels and disputes between the Church and the Empire; but on account of the death of the said M. Buondelmonte all the families of the nobles and other citizens of Florence took sides, and some held with the Buondelmonti, who joined the Guelf party and became its leaders, and some with the Uberti, who became the leaders of the Ghibellines. And from this followed great evil and ruin to our city, which is like never to have an end, unless God bring it to an end." [1]

Villani then proceeds to give a list of the noble families in Florence who joined either side, the Guelfs, as he has already explained, under the leadership of the Buondelmonti, and the Ghibellines under that of the Uberti. "And this," he repeats, "is how these accursed parties took their origin in Florence, albeit at first not very openly, there being division among the nobles of the city, in that some loved the rule of the Church, and some that of the Empire, nevertheless as

[1] Villani, bk. v. ch. 38.

to the good estate and well-being of the commonwealth all were at one."

The conflict between the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence, thus commenced by the murder of Buondelmonte, continued, with varying fortune to either side, for a period of fifty-two years, from 1215 to 1267, when the Guelf party finally remained masters of the situation. In 1248 the Emperor Frederick II., wishing to retaliate upon the Papacy for the unjust sentence of deposition pronounced against him by Innocent IV. three years before at the Council of Lyons, and anxious to weaken the Church party, made offers to the Uberti, the leaders of the Florentine Ghibellines, to help them to expel from their city his enemies and their own. His offer being accepted, he despatched a force of German horsemen under his son, Frederich of Antioch, by whose aid, after a fierce struggle, the Guelfs were driven out.

Villani gives a vivid account of the street-fighting which took place on this occasion. Being a Guelf, he naturally has no sympathy with Frederick and his allies. "In these times," he writes, "Frederick being in Lombardy, after his deposition from the title of Emperor by Pope Innocent, set himself, so far as he was able, to destroy in Tuscany and Lombardy the faithful sons of Holy Church in every city where he had power. And inasmuch as our city of Florence was not among the least

notable and powerful of Italy, he desired to pour out his venom upon her, and to breed further strife between the accursed parties of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, which had begun some time before through the murder of Buondelmonte, and even earlier, as we have already related. But although since then the said parties had continued among the nobles of Florence, and they had at sundry times been at war among themselves on account of their private enmities, and were divided by reason of the said parties and held to their several sides, those who were called Guelfs preferring the government of the Pope and Holy Church, and those who were called Ghibellines favouring the Emperor and his following, nevertheless the people and commonwealth of Florence were steadfast in unity, to the well-being and honour and good estate of the republic.

"But now the Emperor sending letters and ambassadors to the family of the Uberti, who were the heads of his party, and to their following who called themselves Ghibellines, invited them to drive from the city their enemies the Guelfs, offering some of his horsemen to help them. And thus he caused the Uberti to begin dissension and civil warfare in Florence, whereby the city fell into great disorder, and the nobles and all the people were divided, some holding to one side and some to the other; and in several quarters of the city there was

fighting for a long time. The chief of it was among the houses of the Uberti, where the great palace of the people now stands; there they gathered with their followers and fought against the Guelfs of San Piero Scheraggio; and the Guelfs from beyond Arno crossed over by the river dams and came and helped to fight the Uberti. The next place was in Porte San Piero, where the Tedaldini were the chief Ghibellines, as having the strongest buildings, palaces, and towers; and they and their allies fought against the Donati, the Adimari, and others. And the third fight took place in Porte del Duomo, by the tower of Messer Lancia de' Cattani of Castiglione, with the Brunelleschi and other Ghibelline leaders, and many of the populace on the same side, against the Tosinghi and others. And another was in San Brancazio, where the Lamberti were the Ghibelline leaders, with many of the people on their side, against the Guelfs of that quarter. And the Ghibellines in San Brancazio made their stand at the tower of the Soldanieri, where a bolt from the tower struck the Guelf standard-bearer (their standard being a crimson lily on a white field) in the face, so that he died. And on the day the Guelfs were driven out they came in arms and buried him in San Lorenzo; and when they were gone the canons of San Lorenzo removed the body, for fear the Ghibellines

should dig it up and do it violence, inasmuch as this M. Rustico Marignolli was a great captain among the Guelfs. And the Ghibellines made another attack in the Borgo, where the Soldanieri and Guidi were their leaders, against the Buondelmonti, Cavalcanti, and others. And there was fighting between the two sides beyond Arno as well, but here it was chiefly among the populace.

"So it came about that this warfare went on for some time, as they fought at the barriers or barricades, from one quarter to another, and from one tower to another (for there were many towers in Florence in those days, a hundred cubits and more in height), and they used mangonels and other engines of war, and kept up the fighting day and night. In the midst of the struggle the Emperor sent his bastard son Frederick to Florence, with sixteen hundred of his German horsemen. And when the Ghibellines heard that they were at hand, they took heart and fought more stoutly and with greater boldness against the Guelfs, who had no other help, and looked for none, seeing that the Pope was at Lyons on Rhone, beyond the mountains, and that the power of Frederick was far too great in every part of Italy. And at this time the Ghibellines made use of a device of war, for they collected the greater part of their force at the house of the Uberti, and when the fighting began in the

quarters named above, they went in a body to oppose the Guelfs, and by this means overpowered them in nearly every part of the city, save in their own quarter, against the barricade of the Guidalotti and Bagnesi, who held out for a time; and to that place the Guelfs repaired, and the whole force of the Ghibellines against them. At last the Guelfs, finding themselves hard pressed, and learning that the Emperor's horsemen were already in Florence (King Frederick having arrived with his men on the Sunday morning), after holding out until the Wednesday, abandoned the defence, the force of the Ghibellines being too strong for them, and fled from the city on Candlemas night (Feb. 2), in the year 1248." [1]

Villani goes on to describe how the Ghibellines made use of their victory, ruthlessly destroying their enemies' property, and even attempting to wreck the beautiful Baptistery of San Giovanni, which the Guelfs used as a meeting-place, by throwing down upon it the neighbouring Tower of the "Guardamorto,"—so called because the bodies of those taken to be buried in San Giovanni rested there. In this attempt fortunately they failed, and the Baptistery, which before the erection of the present Duomo served as the Cathedral of Florence, stands to this day.

"The Ghibellines, who now remained masters

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 33.

of Florence," continues the chronicler, "set to work to refashion the city after their own manner, razing to the ground thirty-six strongholds of the Guelfs, both palaces and great towers, among them being the noble residence of the Tosinghi in the old Market Place, known as the Palace, which was ninety cubits high, built with marble columns, and had a tower above of a hundred and thirty cubits. And still greater wickedness were the Ghibellines guilty of; for inasmuch as the Guelfs used to come together often to the Church of San Giovanni, and all the good people went there every Sunday morning, and were married there, when the Ghibellines came to destroy the towers of the Guelfs, among the rest was a very tall and beautiful one, which stood upon the Piazza of San Giovanni, at the entrance of the Corso degli Adimari, and it was called the 'Torre del Guardamorto,' because anciently all the good folk who died were buried in San Giovanni, and the foot of this tower the Ghibellines caused to be cut away, and props to be inserted in such wise that when fire was set to the props, the tower might fall upon the Church of San Giovanni.[1]

[1] According to Vasari, this method of throwing down high towers, which is employed to this day for the demolition of disused factory-chimneys, was invented by the famous architect, Niccolò Pisano. He is said to have contrived it on this very occasion of the destruction of the Guardamorto

And this was done; but as it pleased God, by a miracle of the blessed St. John, when the tower, which was a hundred and twenty cubits high, began to fall, it appeared clearly that it would miss the church, and turning round it fell right across the Piazza, whereat all the Florentines marvelled greatly, and the people were much rejoiced. Now mark this," concludes the indignant Villani, "that from the day Florence was rebuilt there had not been a single house destroyed, and this accursed wickedness of destruction was first begun by the Ghibellines at this time."

When later on the turn of the Guelfs came, they retaliated on their foes by building the walls of the city with the stones of Ghibelline palaces.[1] Such was their hatred of the Uberti, the Ghibelline leaders, that it was decreed that the site on which their houses had stood should never again be built on, and it remains to this day the Great Square (Piazza della Signoria) of Florence. When in 1298 the architect Arnolfo di Lapo was commissioned to build the Palazzo della Signoria (now known as the Palazzo Vecchio), he was obliged to

tower, which he was commissioned to carry out. There is a tradition that what Villani attributes to a miracle was in reality due to design on the part of Niccolò, who, wishing to spare the Baptistery, purposely contrived that the tower should fall wide of it.

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 65.

THE CITY OF FLORENCE

sacrifice the symmetry of his plans, and place it awry, the Guelfs insisting, in spite of his repeated protests, that not a stone of the foundations should rest on the accursed ground once occupied by the Uberti.[1]

On the death of the Emperor Frederick (Dec. 13, 1250) the Guelfs were allowed to return to Florence, and a pacification between the two parties took place.

"On the very night," says Villani, "that the Emperor died, the Podestà who held for him in Florence, as he was sleeping in his bed in the house of the Abati, was killed by the fall of the vaulting of his chamber. And this was a sure sign that the Emperor's power was to come to an end in Florence; and so it came to pass very soon, for there being a rising among the people by reason of the violence and excesses of the Ghibelline nobles, and the news of the Emperor's death reaching Florence, a few days afterwards the people recalled and restored the Guelfs who had been driven out, and made them make their peace with the Ghibellines. And this took place on the seventh day of January, in the year of Christ 1250." [2]

[1] Villani, bk. viii. ch. 26; Vasari, *Vita di Arnolfo di Lapo.*

[2] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 42.

CHAPTER II

1251–1260

Renewed hostilities—Adoption of distinctive banners by the two parties in Florence—The Ghibellines intrigue with Manfred and are forced to leave Florence—They retire to Siena and persuade Manfred to send them help—Great Ghibelline victory at Montaperti.

THE peace concluded between the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence after the Emperor Frederick's death was not fated to be of long duration. Already in the very next year several prominent Ghibelline families were expelled from the city on account of their opposition to a Florentine expedition against the neighbouring Ghibelline stronghold of Pistoja. The Pistojans were defeated, and on their return the Florentines, flushed with victory, turned upon their factious opponents at home, and drove them into banishment (July 1251). It was at this time that the two parties definitely adopted distinctive standards, and thus openly ranged themselves in opposite camps, as Villani relates.

"After the banishment of the Ghibelline leaders, the people and the Guelfs who remained masters of Florence changed the arms of the commonwealth of Florence; and whereas of old they bore a white lily on a red field, they now reversed them, making the field white and the lily red; and the Ghibellines retained the former ensign. But the ancient ensign of the commonwealth, half white, half red, that is the standard which went to battle on the Carroccio,[1] was never changed." [2]

Six or seven years later than this (in 1258) the Florentines found it necessary to expel the rest of the important Ghibelline families, in consequence of their having entered into a conspiracy, at the head of which were the Uberti, the Ghibelline leaders, with the aid of Manfred, son of the Emperor Frederick, to break up the popular government of Florence, which was essentially Guelf.

"When this plot was discovered," writes the Florentine chronicler, "the Uberti and their Ghibelline following were summoned to appear before the magistrates, but they refused to obey,

[1] The Carroccio was a large waggon drawn by oxen which carried the standard of the Florentines, and usually accompanied them on the field. See Villani's description given below (pp. 34–35).

[2] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 45.

and violently assaulted and wounded the retinue of the Podestà; for which cause the people rose in arms and in fury made for the houses of the Uberti, where is now the Piazza of the Palace of the People and of the Priors, and slew there one of the Uberti family and several of their retainers; and another of the Uberti and one of the Infangati were taken and, after they had confessed as to the conspiracy, were beheaded in Orto San Michele. And the rest of the Uberti, together with the leading Ghibelline families, fled from Florence, and went to Siena, which was under a Ghibelline Government, and was hostile to Florence; and their palaces and towers, which were many in number, were destroyed, and with the stones were built the walls of San Giorgio beyond Arno, which were begun at this time on account of war with Siena." [1]

In illustration of the temper of the Government at this time, and of their loyalty and uprightness towards the commonwealth, Villani relates how one of their number, who appropriated and sent to his country house a grating which had belonged to the lion's den, and was lying in the mud in the Piazza of San Giovanni, was fined a thousand lire, as having defrauded the State.[2]

The exiled Ghibellines, who had taken refuge in Siena, without loss of time made preparations

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 65. [2] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 65.

for an attempt to win their way back to Florence. Failing to obtain the necessary support from the Sienese, they determined to apply for help to Manfred, who was now King of Sicily, and they sent envoys to the king in Apulia for that purpose. "And when the envoys arrived, being the best captains and leaders among them, there was a long delay, for Manfred neither despatched the business nor gave audience to their request, on account of the many affairs he had on hand. At last when, being anxious to depart, they took leave of him very ill-content, Manfred promised to furnish them a hundred German horsemen for their aid. The envoys, much disturbed at this offer, withdrew to take counsel as to their answer, being minded to refuse such a sorry aid, and ashamed to return to Siena, for they had hoped that Manfred would give them a force of at least fifteen hundred horsemen. But Farinata degli Uberti said: Be not dismayed, let us not refuse his aid in any wise, be it never so little; but let us beg as a favour that he send with them his standard, and when they are come to Siena we will set it in such a place that he will needs have to send us more men. And so it came to pass that following Farinata's wise counsel they accepted Manfred's offer, and prayed him as a favour to send his standard to be at their head; and he did so. And when they returned to

Siena with this scanty force, there was great scorn among the Sienese, and great dismay among the Florentine exiles, who had looked for much greater help and support from King Manfred." [1]

An opportunity for carrying out Farinata's scheme soon offered itself, for in May 1260 the Florentines fitted out a great host and advanced against Siena, with their standard flying from the Carroccio, and their great war-bell tolling. Villani takes occasion in his account of this expedition to give a full description of the pomp observed by the Florentines when they went to war in those days.

"The people and commons of Florence gathered a general host against the city of Siena, and led out the Carroccio. And you must know that the Carroccio which the Florentines led out to war was a car upon four wheels all painted red, and on it were raised two great masts also red, upon which was spread to the wind the great standard with the arms of the commonwealth, half white and half red, as is to be seen to this day in San Giovanni; and it was drawn by a pair of oxen of great size, covered with cloth of red, which were kept solely for this purpose, and the driver was a freeman of the commonwealth. This Carroccio was used by our

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 74.

forefathers in triumphal processions and on high occasions; and when it went out with the host, the lords and counts of the country round, and the noble knights of the city, fetched it from its quarters in San Giovanni, and brought it on to the Piazza of the Mercato Nuovo; and having stationed it beside a boundary-stone, carved like the Carroccio, which is still there, they handed it over to the keeping of the people. And it was escorted to the field of battle by the best and bravest and strongest of the foot-soldiers of the people of the city, who were chosen to guard it, and round it was mustered the whole force of the people. And when war was declared, a month before they were to set out, a bell was hung on the archway of the gate of Santa Maria, which was at the end of the Mercato Nuovo, and it was rung without ceasing night and day; and this was done out of pride, in order that the enemy against whom war was declared might have time to prepare himself. And this bell was called by some the Martinella, and by others the Asses' Bell.[1] And when the Florentine host set out, the bell was taken down from the archway and was hung in a wooden tower on a waggon, and the tolling of it guided the host on its march.

[1] This bell was afterwards hung in the campanile of the Palazzo della Signoria, and was used to summon the magistrates and people to meetings.

And by this pomp of the Carroccio and the bell was maintained the masterful pride of the people of old and of our forefathers when they went to battle.

"And now we will leave that matter and will return to the Florentines and their expedition against Siena. After they had taken three castles of the Sienese, they sat down before the city, hard by the entrance-gate to the monastery of Santa Petronella, and there on a high mound which could be seen from the city they erected a tower, wherein they kept their bell. And in contempt of the Sienese, and as a record of victory, they filled it with earth, and planted an olive tree in it, which was still there down to our days." [1]

It was in the course of these operations before Siena that Farinata's scheme for forcing Manfred to send further assistance to the Ghibelline exiles was put into execution.

"It came to pass during the siege of Siena that one day the exiled Florentines gave a feast to King Manfred's German horsemen, and having plied them well with wine till they were drunk, they raised a shout and instantly urged them to arm and get to horse and attack the Florentine host, promising them large gifts and double pay; and this was craftily devised in accordance with

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 75.

the counsel given by M. Farinata degli Uberti when in Apulia. The Germans, flushed with wine and excitement, sallied out from Siena, and made a vigorous attack on the camp of the Florentines, who were unprepared, and had only a small guard, as they made little account of the enemy's forces; and the Germans, though they were only few in number, in their sudden assault wrought great havoc among the Florentines, numbers of whom, both horse and foot, behaved very ill, and fled in a panic, supposing their assailants to be in much greater force. But presently, seeing their mistake, they took to their arms, and made a stand against the Germans, and of all who came out from Siena not a single one escaped alive, for they overpowered and slew them every one; and King Manfred's standard was captured and dragged through the camp, and taken to Florence; and shortly afterwards the Florentine host returned to Florence." [1]

The Ghibellines lost no time in sending the news to Manfred of how his Germans had nearly put to flight the whole Florentine army, and they represented that if there had been more of them they would undoubtedly have been victorious; owing, however, to their small number they had all been left dead upon the field, and the royal standard had been captured, and insulted, and

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 75.

dragged in the mire through the Florentine camp, and afterwards in the streets of Florence. In this manner they used the arguments which they knew would most strongly appeal to Manfred, who, now that his honour was involved, engaged to send into Tuscany, under the command of Count Giordano, eight hundred more of his German horsemen, their services to be at the disposal of the Ghibellines for the space of three months, the cost being borne half by Manfred and half by the Sienese and their allies. This force reached Siena at the end of July 1260, and was welcomed with great rejoicings not only by the Sienese and the Florentine exiles, but by the whole of the Ghibellines throughout Tuscany. "And when they were come to Siena, immediately the Sienese sent out an expedition against the castle of Montalcino, which was subject to the commonwealth of Florence, and they sent for aid to the Pisans and to all the Ghibellines of Tuscany, so that what with the horsemen of Siena, and the exiles from Florence, together with the Germans, and their other allies, they had eighteen hundred horsemen in Siena, of whom the Germans were the best part." [1]

The great anxiety of the Sienese and their allies now was to draw the Florentines into the field,

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 76.

before the three months expired during which the services of King Manfred's Germans were at their disposal. Farinata degli Uberti, therefore, with the connivance of the Sienese, entered into secret negotiations with the Florentines, pretending that the exiled Ghibellines were dissatisfied with the Sienese, and longed for peace, and that many of the Sienese themselves were anxious to shake off the government of their arrogant leader, Provenzano Salvani. He consequently proposed to the Florentines that, under pretext of relieving Montalcino, which was being besieged by the Sienese, they should despatch a strong force to the Arbia, in readiness for an attack on Siena, one of the gates of which he promised should be opened to them. The majority of the Florentines, completely deceived, were for accepting Farinata's proposal, and acting on it without delay. But the wiser heads among them were not so sanguine. The great Guelf nobles, with the renowned Guido Guerra [1] at their head, and with Tegghiaio Aldobrandi [2] as their spokesman, knowing more of the conditions of warfare, and being aware that their enemies had been reinforced by a body of German mercenaries, looked upon the undertaking with grave misgivings, and counselled delay, until the Germans, whose term of three months had already half expired, should be

[1] *Inferno*, xvi. 38. [2] *Inferno*, vi. 79; xvi. 41–42.

disbanded. But the minds of the others were made up, and they obstinately refused to listen to reason,—one of them even going so far as to taunt Tegghiaio, who was acknowledged as a brave and valiant knight, with cowardice, to which he replied by challenging his opponent to adventure himself on the day of battle wherever he himself should go.

"And so, through the proud and headstrong people, the worse counsel prevailed, namely, that the host should set forth immediately and without delay. And the people of Florence having taken the ill resolve to send the expedition, asked their allies for help; and there came foot and horse from Lucca, and Bologna, and Pistoja, and Prato, and Volterra, and San Miniato, and San Gemignano, and from Colle in the Valdelsa, all of which were in league with the commonwealth and people of Florence; and in Florence there were eight hundred horsemen belonging to the city, and more than five hundred mercenaries. And when all these were assembled in Florence, the host set out at the end of August, with the Carroccio and the bell called Martinella, and with them went out nearly all the people, with the banners of the guilds, and there was scarce a house or a family in Florence which did not send, on foot or mounted, at least one, or two, or more, according as they were able.

"And when they arrived in the Sienese territory, at the place agreed upon on the Arbia, called Montaperti,[1] together with the men of Perugia and of Orvieto, who there joined the Florentines, there were in all assembled more than three thousand horsemen, and more than thirty thousand foot.

"And while the Florentine host was thus making ready, the Ghibelline conspirators in Siena, to make sure of the success of their plot, sent other messengers to Florence to concert treason with certain of the Ghibellines who had not been exiled from Florence, and who were obliged to join in the common muster of the Florentines. With these it was agreed that, when they were drawn up for battle, they should desert from their companies in every quarter, and come over to the other side, so as to throw the Florentines into a panic; for to the Ghibellines their own force appeared to be small compared with that of the Florentines. And this was agreed upon. Meanwhile the Florentine host was on the hills of Montaperti, and the leaders who had entered into the secret negotiations with M. Farinata degli Uberti, as has already been told, were waiting for the traitors within Siena to open one of the gates to them, as had been promised.

[1] *Inferno*, x. 85–86; xxxii. 81.

"And one of the Ghibellines in the Florentine host, named Razzante, having got wind of what the Florentines were waiting for, with the consent of the Ghibellines in the camp who were meditating treason, galloped out from the camp into Siena, in order to make known to the Florentine exiles how the city of Siena was to be betrayed, and how the Florentine host was well equipped, with great force of horse and foot, and to urge those inside not to hazard battle. And when he was come into Siena and had laid these things before M. Farinata and the others who were in the secret, they said to him: It will be the death of us if you spread this news abroad in Siena, inasmuch as every one will be panic-struck; but do you say the contrary, for, if we do not fight while we have these Germans, we are all dead men, and shall never see Florence again; death and defeat would be better for us, than to go moping about the world any longer. And they decided to adventure the fortune of battle.

"So Razzante, being primed by them, promised to speak after their mind; and with a garland on his head, and with great show of joy, accompanied on horseback by M. Farinata and M. Gherardo de' Lamberti, he came to the assembly in the palace where were all the people of Siena, with the Germans, and their other

allies. And here, with a joyful countenance, he told great news from the Ghibellines and traitors in the enemy's camp, how the Florentine host was ill-ordered, and badly led, and disunited; and how, if they were boldly attacked, they would of a certainty be routed. Having heard this false account from Razzante, at the cry of the people they all rushed to arms, shouting: To battle, to battle. And the Germans demanded a promise of double pay, which was granted; and their troop led the way to the attack by the gate of San Vito, which was to have been given over to the Florentines; and the rest of the horse and foot marched out behind them.

"When those among the Florentine host who were waiting for the gate to be opened to them, saw the Germans and the rest of the horse and foot coming out from Siena against them, as for battle, they wondered greatly, and were in no small alarm, at the sight of their sudden advance and unexpected attack; and they were still further dismayed, when a number of the Ghibellines who were in their camp, both on horse and on foot, seeing the enemy's troops advance, treacherously deserted to the other side, as had been previously arranged. Nevertheless the Florentines and their allies did not neglect to draw up their ranks and await the onset.

"And as the troop of Germans charged headlong

into the body of Florentine horsemen, where was the standard of the commonwealth cavalry, which was carried by M. Jacopo del Nacca of the Pazzi family of Florence, a man of great valour, the traitor, M. Bocca degli Abati,[1] who was in his troop and close to him, struck M. Jacopo with his sword, and cut off the hand with which he was holding the standard. And when this was done, both horse and foot, seeing the standard down, and finding that there were traitors among them, and that they were being furiously attacked by the Germans, very soon turned and fled. But owing to the Florentine horsemen being the first to discover the treachery, there were but thirty-six men of note among them taken or killed. The greatest number of killed and prisoners was among the Florentine foot, and those of Lucca and of Orvieto, inasmuch as they shut themselves up in the castle of Montaperti, and were all taken; but more than two thousand five hundred of them were left dead on the field, and more than fifteen hundred were taken prisoners of the flower of the people of Florence, of every family, and of Lucca, and of the rest of the allies who took part in the battle.

"And thus was abased the arrogance of the ungrateful and overbearing people of Florence. And this took place on Tuesday, the fourth

[1] *Inferno*, xxxii. 78–111.

of September, in the year of Christ 1260. And there was taken the Carroccio,[1] and the Martinella, and an immense booty, of the baggage of the Florentines and their allies. And on this day was broken and destroyed the ancient people of Florence, which had continued in so great power and estate, and with so great victories, for the space of ten years." [2]

The victorious Sienese returned into their city "with great triumph and glory, to the utter shame and disgrace and confusion of the dogs of Florentines," the procession being headed by the Florentine envoy seated on an ass, with his face to its tail, which he held as a bridle, and dragging behind him in the mud the standard of the commonwealth of Florence.[3]

[1] Two flagstaffs, said to be those of the Florentine Carroccio captured at Montaperti, are preserved in the Cathedral of Siena.

[2] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 78.

[3] From a contemporary account by a Sienese chronicler.

CHAPTER III

1261–1267

Flight of the Guelfs from Florence—Farinata degli Uberti saves Florence from destruction — The Ghibellines supreme in Tuscany—Defeat of Manfred at Benevento by Charles of Anjou—Flight of Guido Novello and the Ghibelline allies from Florence — Guy de Montfort arrives in Florence as Charles' vicar—Guelf supremacy finally re-established.

THE news of the terrible disaster at Montaperti was received in Florence with the utmost consternation, "and there arose so great a lamentation both of men and women that it reached to the heavens, inasmuch as there was not a house in the city that had not one killed or a prisoner."[1] The Guelfs did not wait to be driven out, but hastily fled with their families to Lucca, abandoning the city of Florence to its fate. "And for this desertion the Guelfs were greatly to be blamed, seeing that the city of Florence was strongly fortified with walls and with moats full

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 79.

of water, and might well have been defended and held. But the judgment of God must needs run its course without let in the punishment of wickedness; and to whom God intends ill, him He deprives of wisdom and forethought. And the Guelfs having departed on the Thursday, on the Sunday following, being the sixteenth day of September, the exiles from Florence who had taken part in the battle at Montaperti, together with Count Giordano and his German troops, and the other soldiers of the Tuscan Ghibellines, laden with the spoils of the Florentines and other Guelfs of Tuscany, entered into the city of Florence without hindrance of any kind; and immediately they appointed Guido Novello, of the Counts Guidi, Podestà of Florence for King Manfred, for the term of two years from the following January." [1]

The whole of Tuscany, with the exception of Lucca, was now in the hands of the Ghibellines, who proceeded to hold a great council of their party at Empoli, about twenty miles from Florence, for the purpose of establishing a Ghibelline league. At this council it was proposed by the deputies from Siena and Pisa, the two most bitter enemies of Florence, that in order effectually to secure the ascendency of the Ghibelline party, and to put an end once and for all to the power of the Florentines, the city of Florence should be razed

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 79.

to the ground. To this savage proposal, which was approved by the majority of the assembly, Farinata degli Uberti offered the most determined opposition, declaring that he would defend his native city with his own sword as long as he had breath in his body, even though he should have to do it single-handed.[1] In consequence of this vehement protest the proposal was abandoned, Count Giordano fearing lest Farinata and his following should withdraw from the league and so lead to the break up of the Ghibelline party in Tuscany. "And thus by one good man and citizen," says Villani, "our city of Florence escaped so great fury, and destruction, and ruin."[2]

After their great victory at Montaperti the Ghibellines remained in undisputed possession of Florence, and of all the other cities of Tuscany, save Lucca alone, which now became the stronghold of the exiled Guelfs. The latter, however, were not allowed to remain long in their place of refuge. The Florentine Ghibellines, finding them troublesome neighbours, and learning that they were intriguing with the young Conradin, King Manfred's nephew, sent two successive expeditions with the forces of the Tuscan league, under Count Guido Novello, against Lucca, and forced

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 81; *Inferno*, x 91–93.
[2] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 81.

FARINATA DEGLI UBERTI

Statue by Pazzi in the Portico of the Uffizi at Florence

the Lucchese to expel the refugees from their city (1263). The unhappy Guelfs, deprived of their last foothold in Tuscany, fled across the Apennines to Bologna, and with their departure "there remained neither town nor castle, little or great, throughout Tuscany but was subject to the Ghibellines." [1]

The period of Ghibelline ascendency, however, was not destined to be a long one. Within a few years the tide of fortune had once more turned against them. Their champion and protector, King Manfred, to whose assistance they owed their triumph at Montaperti, while at the height of his power was suddenly overthrown, and the Ghibelline party was involved in his ruin.

In the spring of 1265 Charles of Anjou, brother of the French king, entered Italy at the invitation of the Pope (Clement IV.), as the champion of Holy Church and of the Guelf cause, to take possession of the kingdom of Sicily, which the Pope declared to have been forfeited by Manfred. Having collected a large force, Charles in the following January was crowned King of Sicily and Apulia at Rome, and immediately afterwards set out to invade Manfred's dominions. Manfred was prepared to make a stubborn resistance, and on February 26, 1266,[2] the two armies met at

[1] Villani, bk. vi. ch. 85.

[2] According to the reckoning of the Florentines, whose year began on March 25, this was Feb. 26, 1265. See note, p. 59.

Benevento, about thirty miles north-east from Naples. Manfred's force was in three divisions, consisting of his Saracen archers, German cavalry, and a reserve of Apulian barons. The French army was in four divisions, one of which was composed of the Guelf exiles from Florence and other Tuscan cities, under the leadership of Guido Guerra. At the sight of these last Manfred is said to have exclaimed bitterly: Where are the Ghibellines for whom I have done so much?" His Germans and Saracens fought with desperate valour, but were outnumbered by the French. Manfred accordingly ordered the Apulian barons to charge, but they, either through cowardice or treachery, instead of obeying, turned and fled from the field. With a handful of troops who still remained faithful, Manfred resolved to die rather than seek safety in flight, and plunging into the thickest of the fight, he fell dead in the midst of the enemy.[1]

The defeat and death of Manfred was a crushing blow to the Ghibelline cause, and the effects of it soon began to be felt throughout Tuscany, and in Florence in particular. "When the news came to Florence and the rest of Tuscany of the discomfiture of Manfred, the Ghibellines began to lose heart and to be afraid in every part. And the Guelf exiles from Florence, who were out-

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 9.

lawed, everywhere began to grow stronger and to take heart and courage; and they drew close to the city, and, in concert with their friends inside who had an understanding with them, they made plots for a change and for a new state of affairs within the city, for they had hopes from the Guelfs who had taken part in King Charles' victory, whom they looked for to come to their aid together with some of the French. Wherefore the people of Florence, who at heart were more Guelf than Ghibelline, by reason of the losses they had received, one of his father, another of his son, and another of his brothers, at the defeat at Montaperti, likewise began to take courage; and they murmured and complained throughout the city of the expenses and heavy burdens which were laid on them by Count Guido Novello and by the others who were ruling the city.

"Seeing this, and hearing the tumult and murmuring throughout the city, the rulers, for fear the people should rise against them, in order to content them and by way of compromise elected two knights of the Jovial Friars of Bologna to hold the office of Podestà in Florence,[1] one of whom was a Guelf, and the other a Ghibelline. And

[1] Hitherto the office had always been filled by a single individual. The names of the two were Catalano de' Malavolti and Loderingo degli Andalò, the former a Guelf, the latter a Ghibelline. Cf. *Inferno*, xxiii. 103–108.

they ordained thirty-six good men, merchants and handicraftsmen of the greatest and best in the city, the which were to give counsel to the said two, and were to make provision for the expenses of the commonwealth; and of this number were both Guelfs and Ghibellines, both of the people and of the trusty nobles, such as had remained in Florence when the Guelfs were driven out. And the said thirty-six met together every day to take counsel for the good estate and common weal of the city; and they made many good ordinances for the welfare of the commonwealth, among the which they ordained that each of the seven greater Arts[1] in Florence should have a college and consuls, and that each should have its own banner and ensign, in order that, if there were any rising in the city with force of arms, they might assemble under their banners for the defence of the people and of the commonwealth.

"Now by reason of these changes which were made in the city of Florence by the two Podestà and the said thirty-six, the noble Ghibelline houses of Florence, to wit the Uberti, and the Lamberti, and the rest of the Ghibelline nobles, began to fear for their party; for it seemed to them that the

[1] These were, the judges and notaries; the merchants of Calimala, *i.e.* of French cloths; the money-changers; the wool-workers; the physicians and apothecaries; the silk-workers and mercers; and the furriers.

thirty-six supported and favoured the Guelfs of the people who had remained in Florence, and that every change was against the Ghibelline party. By reason of this fear, and because of the news of the victory of King Charles, Count Guido Novello sent for help to all their allies near at hand, namely to Pisa, and Siena, and Arezzo, and Pistoja, and Prato, and Volterra, and Colle, and San Gemignano, so that, together with six hundred Germans, they mustered in Florence fifteen hundred horsemen in all. And it came to pass that in order to pay the German troops which were with Count Guido Novello, as captain of the league, he demanded that a levy should be made of ten per cent.; but the thirty-six looked for some other means of finding the money, which should be less of a burden to the people. For this cause, when they had delayed some days longer than seemed good to the Count and the other Ghibelline nobles of Florence, by reason of the suspicion they felt concerning the ordinances made by the people, the said nobles determined to raise a tumult in the city, and to do away the office of the thirty-six, with the help of the great body of horsemen which the Count had in Florence.

"And when they had taken arms, the first who began were the Lamberti, who with their men-at-arms came out from their houses in the Calimala[1]

[1] The Calimala was the street which connected the

shouting: Where are the thirty-six, the robbers, that we may cut them all in pieces? And the said thirty-six were at that time in council in the warehouse where the consuls of the Calimala administered justice, below the house of the Cavalcanti in the Mercato Nuovo; and hearing this they broke up the council, and in a moment the whole city was in a tumult, and the shops were shut, and every one rushed to arms. The people all assembled together in the wide street of Santa Trinita, in very great numbers, and they took their stand by the house of the Soldanieri, and put up barricades at the foot of the tower of the Girolami. Count Guido Novello, with all the horsemen, and the Ghibelline nobles of Florence, was in arms and mounted in the Piazza of San Giovanni; and they moved out against the people, and drew up in front of the barricade and made some show and attempt at fighting, but the people held their ground, defending themselves with crossbows, and shooting from the towers and houses. And Count Guido, seeing that they could not dislodge the people, gave the signal to retire, and went back with all the horsemen to the Piazza of San Giovanni; and from there he went to the palace of the Podestà and demanded the keys of the city-gates in order that they

Mercato Vecchio with the Mercato Nuovo. In it were located the cloth-merchants.

might get out of the city. And the two Podestà cried out from the palace to those who were with the Count that he should return to his house and not depart from the city, and that they would quiet the people and would see that the soldiers were paid. But the Count, being in great dread and suspicion of the people, would not listen, but would have only the keys of the gates. And this was a proof that it was the work of God, and no other cause; for this great and powerful body of horsemen had not been attacked, nor driven out, nor disbanded, nor was there any force to oppose them; for although the people were armed and collected together, this was more from fear than to attack the Count and his horsemen, and they would soon have been quieted, and would have returned to their homes and have laid down their arms. But when the judgment of God is ripe, the occasion is ever at hand. And after the Count had received the keys, he went out with all his horsemen by the old ox-gate, and made for Prato, where they came in the evening; and this was on St. Martin's Day, the eleventh of November, in the year of Christ 1266." [1]

When Count Guido and his forces were safe in Prato they began to realise that they had committed an act of folly in leaving Florence without striking a blow, and they determined to return

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 13–14.

the next day. But the Florentines were in no mood to throw away their advantage and risk exposing themselves once more to the Count's vengeance; so that when he and his horsemen presented themselves in the morning at the gate of the Carraja bridge, and demanded admission to the city, they were met with a refusal; and when they made an attempt to force the gate they were shot at and many of them wounded; and at last, neither threats nor persuasion being of any avail, they were obliged to retreat. "And when they reached Prato they bitterly reproached one another; but after a thing ill-advised and worse done, repentance is in vain."[1]

The Florentines now dismissed the two Bolognese from the office of Podestà, and sent to Orvieto for a Podestà and Captain of the People, who arrived with a guard of a hundred horsemen for the protection of the city. "And by a treaty of peace in the following January both Guelfs and Ghibellines were restored to Florence, and many marriages and alliances were made between them, among which these were the chief: Bonaccorso Bellincioni degli Adimari gave for wife to M. Forese, his son, the daughter of Count Guido Novello; and M. Bindo, his brother, took one of the Ubaldini; and M. Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti gave for wife to Guido, his son,

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 15.

the daughter of M. Farinata degli Uberti;[1] and M. Simone Donati gave his daughter to M. Azzolino, son of M. Farinata degli Uberti.

"But by reason of these alliances the other Guelfs of Florence held all these as doubtful members of the party; wherefore this peace lasted but a short time, for when the Guelfs had returned to Florence, feeling themselves powerful, and emboldened by the victory which they and King Charles had gained over Manfred, they sent secretly into Apulia to the said King Charles for troops and for a captain. And the king sent Count Guy of Montfort, with eight hundred French horsemen, who arrived in Florence on Easter Day in the year of Christ 1267. And when the Ghibellines heard of his coming, the night before, they departed out of Florence without stroke of sword, and went, some to Siena, some to Pisa, and some to other places. And the Florentine Guelfs gave the lordship of their city to King Charles for ten years; and he accepted it; and for the exercise thereof he sent year by year his vicars, that together with twelve good men, citizens of Florence, his vicar should govern the city. And be it noted that the

[1] Farinata had died in Florence about two years before. The name of his daughter was Beatrice; the actual date of her marriage to Guido Cavalcanti, by which they had two children, is unknown. Guido at the time of the betrothal cannot have been more than seventeen, at the outside.

expulsion of the Ghibellines at this time was on the same day, namely Easter Day, whereon they had committed the murder of M. Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti, from which arose the factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence, and laid waste the city; and it seemed to be a judgment from God, for never more did the Ghibellines return to power in Florence." [1]

"And at the same time that the city of Florence came into the hands of the Guelfs, and the Ghibellines were driven out, and King Charles' vicar came into Tuscany, many of the cities of Tuscany likewise returned to the Guelf party and drove out the Ghibellines, namely, the cities of Lucca, and of Pistoja, and Volterra, and Prato, and San Gemignano, and Colle; and they made a league with the Florentines, whereof the head was King Charles' vicar, with eight hundred French horsemen; and there remained to the Ghibelline party only the cities of Pisa and of Siena. And in so short space of time, by reason of the defeat of King Manfred and of the victory of King Charles, was the state of affairs changed in Tuscany and in many cities of Lombardy, which from being on the side of the Ghibellines and of the Empire passed over to the side of the Guelfs and of the Church." [2]

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 15.

[2] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 20.

PART II

DANTE IN FLORENCE

CHAPTER I

1265–1290

Dante's birth and ancestry — His father and mother — Cacciaguida — Geri del Bello — Beatrice Portinari — Episodes in the *Vita Nuova* — Folco Portinari — Death of Beatrice.

DANTE ALIGHIERI was born in Florence in May 1265, a few months before, and, according to the Florentine reckoning,[1] in the same year as, the great victory of Charles of Anjou over King Manfred at Benevento, which ruined

[1] The battle of Benevento, according to our reckoning, was fought on Feb. 26, 1266; but as the Florentine year began on March 25, according to their reckoning it was fought on Feb. 26, 1265. The date according to both styles is indicated by writing Feb. 26, $126\frac{5}{6}$, where the *lower* figure represents the *modern*, and the *upper* figure the *old*, method of reckoning.

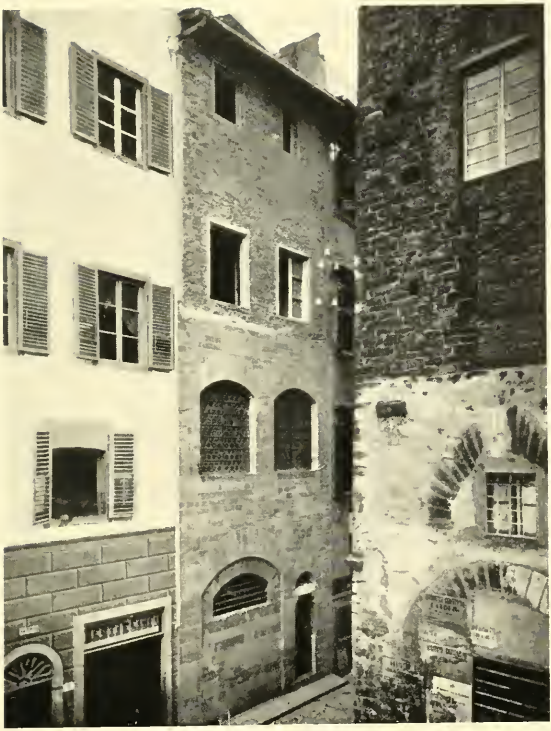
the Ghibelline cause, and once more restored the Guelf supremacy in Florence and throughout Tuscany. Dante's family were Guelfs.[1] This he himself tells us in the *Divina Commedia,* in his account of his conversation with the Ghibelline Farinata degli Uberti in Hell. Dante having answered Farinata's question as to who were his forefathers, Farinata says: "They were fierce foes of me and of my fathers and of my party, so that twice we scattered them" (*i.e.* in 1248 and 1260). To which Dante retorts: "If my side were driven out twice from Florence, both times they returned (*i.e.* in 1251 and 1266), which your side have not been able to do."[2]

Dante's father, whose name was Alighiero, lived in the quarter of San Martino del Vescovo;[3]

[1] It may be noted that Dante's intimacies were for the most part among the Guelfs: his mentor, Brunetto Latino, was a Guelf; his friend, Guido Cavalcanti, was a Guelf; his wife, Gemma Donati, was a Guelf; and his uncle Burnetto fought on the Guelf side at the battle of Montaperti. On the other hand, his mother is conjectured to have belonged to the Ghibelline family of the Abati; while his stepmother was one of the Guelf Cialuffi.

[2] *Inferno,* x. 42–51.

[3] The house in which Dante was born is still preserved. It is situated in what is now known as the Via Dante Alighieri, a continuation of the Via Tavolini, which starts from the Via Calzaioli, a little above Or San Michele, and leads at right angles into the Via de' Cerchi, on the opposite side of which begins the Via Dante.



DANTE'S HOUSE IN FLORENCE

he was the son of Bellincione degli Alighieri, and was descended, as is supposed, from the ancient and noble family of the Elisei, who lived in the Sesto di Porta San Piero in Florence. Boccaccio goes so far as to trace Dante's descent from the noble Frangipani family of Rome, but of this connection we have no evidence. His connection with the Elisei, on the other hand, seems hardly doubtful. Several names occur among Dante's ancestry which are common among the Elisei, and one of his ancestors, who is mentioned in the *Divina Commedia*, actually bore the name of Eliseo.[1]

The name of Dante's mother was Bella, but it is not known for certain to what family she belonged. There are grounds for believing that she was the daughter of Durante, son of Scolaio degli Abati (a Ghibelline family); in which case there can be little doubt that Dante's Christian name (a contraction of Durante) was derived from his maternal grandfather. Dante's father was a notary.[2] He was twice married, and died when his son was about eighteen.[3] Bella, who

[1] *Paradiso*, xv. 136. Eliseo was the brother of Dante's great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, who had another brother called Moronto, one of the Elisei names.

[2] His name occurs at the foot of three documents, one dated 1239, the other two 1256, as "Alagerius ymperiali auctoritate iudex atque notarius."

[3] Dante is mentioned in a document dated 1283 as "the

died in or before 1278, was Alighiero's first wife, and Dante was their only child. By his second wife, Lapa, daughter of Chiarissimo Cialuffi,[1] Alighiero had three children, a son Francesco, who survived his half-brother Dante more than twenty years, a daughter Tana, and another daughter, name unknown, who married one Leon Poggi. A son of this Leon Poggi, called Andrea, was an intimate friend of Boccaccio, who says that he bore a remarkable resemblance to his uncle Dante both in face and figure. From Andrea Poggi Boccaccio learned many details about Dante's habits and manner of life.

Dante's father can hardly have been a person of much consequence in Florence; otherwise, as a Guelf, he would have shared the exile of his party after the disastrous defeat of the Florentine Guelfs at Montaperti (Sept. 4, 1260), which from the fact that Dante was born in Florence in 1265 it would appear that he did not do. At any rate if he did leave Florence on that occasion he must have returned before the rest of his party,

heir of his father, the late Alighieri" ("Dante del già Alighieri del popolo di S. Martino del Vescovo, come herede del padre, vende," etc.).

[1] Both Lapa and Bella are mentioned in a document relating to the Alighieri family, dated May 16, 1332, at which date Lapa was still alive.

since the restoration of the Guelfs did not take place, as has been related in a former chapter, until January 1267.[1] The only contemporary references to Alighiero occur in a poetical correspondence (or *tenzone*)[2] between Dante and his friend Forese Donati, from whose expressions it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Dante's father was either a personal coward or of little moral worth.

Judging from the position of their house in the heart of the city, and from Dante's own allusions in the *Divina Commedia*,[3] the Alighieri would seem to have been a noble family, as nobility went in those days. The fact that they are not mentioned by Giovanni Villani in his several lists of the important Guelf families of Florence[4] may be accounted for on the ground that though of "ancient and honourable lineage,"[5] they were neither wealthy nor numerous.

Nothing is known for certain of any of Dante's ancestors further back than his great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, whose existence is attested by a document dated Dec. 9, 1189, in which his two

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 15. See above, p. 56.

[2] Dante's half-brother and sister, Francesco and Tana, are also mentioned by Forese in this *tenzone*, which is printed in the Oxford Dante (third edition).

[3] *Paradiso*, xv. 40–45; *Inferno*, xv. 74–78.

[4] Villani, bk. v. ch. 39; bk. vi. ch. 33, 79.

[5] Villani, bk. ix. ch. 136.

sons, Preitenitto and Alighiero,[1] bind themselves to remove a fig tree growing against the wall of the Church of San Martino. In another document recently discovered, and dated April 28, 1131, appears the name of a Cacciaguida, son of Adamo,[2] who on plausible grounds has been identified with Dante's ancestor; in which case our knowledge of Dante's ancestry goes back one generation further. Cacciaguida's history, in so far as we are acquainted with it, is related in the *Divina Commedia*,[3] where we are told that he was born in Florence in the Sesto di Porta San Piero about the year 1090; that he belonged (as is supposed) to the Elisei, one of the old Florentine families which boasted Roman descent; that he was baptized in the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence; that he had two brothers, Moronto and Eliseo; that his wife came from the valley of the Po (probably from Ferrara), and that from her, through his son, Dante got his surname of Alighieri; that he followed the Emperor Conrad III. on the Second Crusade, and was knighted by him; and finally that he fell fighting against the infidel about the year 1147. Cacciaguida indicates[4] the situation of the house in which he and

[1] "Preitenittus et Alaghieri fratres, filii olim Cacciaguide."

[2] "Cacciaguide filii Adami."

[3] *Paradiso*, XV. 19–XVI. 45. [4] *Paradiso*, XVI. 40–42.

his ancestors lived in Florence as being "in the place where the last sextary is first attained by him who runs in the yearly horse-race," *i.e.* on the boundary of the district known later as the Sesto di Porta San Piero.[1]

By his wife, Alighiera degli Alighieri, Cacciaguida had two sons, already mentioned, namely, Preitenitto and Alighiero. The latter in his turn had two sons, one of whom, Bellincione, was Dante's grandfather; while the other, Bello, was the father of the Geri del Bello, in connection with whom Dante alludes in the *Divina Commedia*[2] to a piece of family history, which shows that the *Vendetta* was a recognised institution in Florence in those days, and moreover that it was approved by Dante. It appears that Geri was a turbulent and quarrelsome person, and had stirred up bad blood among certain members of the Sacchetti family of Florence, one of whom

[1] The house of the Elisei stood not far from the junction of the Mercato Vecchio and the Corso, apparently just at the angle formed on the north side of the present Via de' Speziali by its intersection with the Via Calzaioli. The Sesto di Porta San Piero appears to have been the last of the city divisions to be traversed by the competitors in the yearly horse-race, who entered the city probably at the Porta San Pancrazio, close to where the Palazzo Strozzi now stands, crossed the Mercato Vecchio, and finished in the Corso, which was thence so called.

[2] *Inferno*, xxix. 3-36.

retaliated by killing him. His murder had not been avenged at the time Dante wrote, and consequently Dante represents him as regarding himself, when they met in Hell, with a threatening and indignant mien because of this neglect on the part of his kindred. Subsequently, more than thirty years after the event, and quite possibly as a result of Dante's allusion to the incident, Geri's death was avenged by his nephews, who murdered one of the Sacchetti in his own house. This blood-feud between the Alighieri and the Sacchetti lasted till 1342, when an act of reconciliation[1] was entered into between the two families at the instance of the Duke of Athens, the guarantor on the part of the Alighieri being Dante's half-brother, Francesco, who appeared on behalf of himself, and his two nephews, Dante's sons, Pietro and Jacopo.

Bellincione, the son of Alighiero, had four sons, of whom the eldest, Alighiero, was Dante's father; the youngest, Brunetto, took part in the battle of Montaperti, where he was in charge of the Florentine Carroccio.

That Dante was born in Florence we know from his own statements several times repeated in his works, the most explicit of which occurs in the *Divina Commedia*,[2] where he says: "I was

[1] The record of this act is still preserved.

[2] *Inferno*, xxiii. 94–95. In the *Convivio* (i. 3) he speaks of

born and bred up in the great city on the fair river Arno." We know from himself too that, like his ancestor Cacciaguida, he was baptized in the ancient Baptistery of San Giovanni.[1] Years afterwards, he tells us,[2] he was instrumental in breaking the font for the purpose of rescuing from suffocation a small boy who had fallen into one of the circular spaces at the side, where the officiating priest stood during baptisms in order to escape the pressure of the crowd.[3]

Of the history of Dante's early years we know little beyond the episode of his love for Beatrice, which is narrated in the *Vita Nuova*. Dante says that he first saw Beatrice when she was at the beginning of her ninth year, and he had nearly completed his ninth year, that is to say, in the spring of 1274. "Her dress on that day," he narrates, "was of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such

"that most beautiful and most famous daughter of Rome, Florence, where I was born and bred up until the climax of my life."

[1] *Paradiso*, xxv. 8–9.

[2] *Inferno*, xix. 17–21.

[3] As baptisms used to take place only on two days in the year, on the eves of Easter and Pentecost, and in the Baptistery alone, the crowd on these occasions must have been very great. Villani, Dante's contemporary, says that in his time the yearly baptisms averaged between five and six thousand; the numbers were checked by means of beans, a black one for every male, a white one for every female.

sort as best suited her very tender age." At the moment when he saw her Dante's heart was possessed by a passionate love for her, which from that time forward, he declares, completely mastered his soul. Boccaccio and Dante's own son, Pietro, tell us that this Beatrice was the daughter of Folco Portinari, a highly respected and influential citizen of Florence. Boccaccio gives the following description of the scene of their first meeting, as he, with his intimate knowledge of Florence and of Florentine ways, imagines it to have taken place.

"In that season of the year when the tender heavens clothe the earth once more with its adornments, and make it everywhere smile with many-coloured flowers mingled with green leaves, it was the custom in our city for the men and women of the several districts to hold festival together in companies, each in his own.[1] Wherefore it came to pass that, among the rest, Folco Portinari, a man much in honour at that time among his fellow-citizens, had on the first of May assembled his neighbours for a festival at his own house. Among the company was the Alighiero of whom we have spoken, attended (as children are wont to attend their parents, especially on festal occasions) by Dante, who had not yet completed his ninth year. And it befell that

[1] Cf. Villani, bk. vii. ch. 132 (*ad fin.*).

mingling here with the others of his own age, both boys and girls, of whom there were many in the house of the giver of the feast, after the first course had been served, in childish fashion he began to play with the others in such wise as befitted his tender years. Among the crowd of children was a daughter of the aforesaid Folco, whose name was Bice (although Dante always called her by her full name Beatrice), and who was then about eight years old. She was very graceful and pretty in her girlish way, and very gentle and pleasing in her manners, and more grave and modest in her demeanour and speech than might have been expected of her years. Besides this the features of her face were very delicate and regular, and full not only of beauty but of such comeliness and charm that by many she was held to be little short of an angel. She then, such as I describe her, or, it may be, far more beautiful, appeared at this feast, not as I suppose for the first time, but for the first time with the power to kindle love, before the eyes of our Dante, who, though still a boy, received into his heart the beauteous image of her with so great affection that from that day forward, so long as he lived, it never departed from him."

Nine years later, when they were both in their eighteenth year, that is to say in 1283, Dante saw Beatrice dressed all in pure white, walking

in the street between two ladies older than herself. On this occasion she turned her eyes upon Dante, and saluted him. After this greeting, which, he says, seemed to reveal to him the utmost limits of happiness, Dante retired to the solitude of his own chamber and sat himself down to think of Beatrice. And as he sat thinking he fell asleep, and had a marvellous vision, whereon he composed a sonnet beginning

"To every captive soul, and gentle heart,"[1]

which is his earliest known composition. This sonnet he sent to various famous poets of the day, and among those from whom he received replies was Guido Cavalcanti, who from this time became Dante's most intimate friend.

Later on, Dante meanwhile, in order to conceal his love for Beatrice, having paid attentions to another lady, Beatrice denied him her salutation, which plunged him into the deepest grief. The next time he saw her was at a wedding-feast, whither he had been taken by a friend, and on this occasion his emotion so overcame him that his confusion was remarked, and the ladies, including Beatrice herself, whispered and mocked at him, whereupon his friend, perceiving his distress, led him from the house. This episode may perhaps be connected with the marriage of Beatrice

[1] "A ciascun' alma presa e gentil core."

Portinari, to which Dante never directly refers in the *Vita Nuova*, but which is known to have taken place in the year 1287, her husband being Simone de' Bardi, a member of one of the great banking-houses of Florence.[1]

Not long after this Dante learned of the death of Beatrice's father, Folco Portinari, whom he describes as a man "of exceeding goodness," and who was a personage of no little importance in Florence, for he had held high office in the city, and had several times served as Prior.[2] He was also a great public benefactor, for in the year of his daughter's marriage he had founded the

[1] The Bardi, who were Guelfs, were of European celebrity as bankers. They had extensive relations with Edward III., through whose default they failed, together with several other important Florentine houses, in 1345, twenty-four years after Dante's death. Edward's debt to the Bardi amounted to nearly a million gold florins.

[2] Folco Portinari was one of the fourteen "Buonomini" instituted in 1281 by Cardinal Latino; and he subsequently three times (in 1282, 1285, and 1287) held the office of Prior. He died on Dec. 31, 1289, and was buried in the chapel of the hospital founded by himself, his funeral being honoured by the official attendance of the Signoria of Florence. He married Cilia di Gherardo de' Caponsacchi of Florence, and had by her a number of children besides Beatrice, who is specially mentioned in his will (dated Jan. 15, 128⅞): "Also to mistress Bice, my daughter, the wife of Messer Simone de' Bardi, I leave fifty Florentine pounds." ("Item Dominae Bici filiae meae, et uxori Domini Simonis de Bardis reliqui libr. 50, ad floren.")

well-known hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence. Folco's death, and the grief of Beatrice for him, brought into Dante's mind the thought that one day Beatrice herself too must die; and in a very short time his forebodings were realised. Beatrice died, within six months of her father, in June 1290, just on the completion of her twenty-fourth year. Dante was for a time overwhelmed with grief,[1] but after a while he devoted himself to the study of philosophy, and having thereby regained his peace of mind, he made the resolve, which is recorded at the conclusion of the *Vita Nuova*, that, should his life be spared, he would write of Beatrice what had never yet been written of any woman, a resolve which was carried into execution in the *Divina Commedia*.

[1] Perhaps it was at this period that Dante, if the tradition mentioned by Buti (in his comment on *Inf.* xvi. 106, and *Purg.* xxx. 42) is to be accepted, joined for a time the Franciscan Order. This tradition is held by some to be confirmed by Dante's reference in the *Inferno* (xvi. 106–108) to the cord with which he was girt, the cord being one of the distinctive marks of the Franciscans, who were hence known as *Cordeliers*. Some see a further confirmation of the tradition in the facts that Dante speaks of the Sun as the 'image of God' (*Convivio*, iii. 12, l. 54) as did St. Francis; and that Statius, on meeting Dante and Virgil in Purgatory, gives them the Franciscan salutation, to which Virgil returns the recognised countersign (*Purg.* xxi. 12–15). It has also been suggested in the same connection that Dante derived his explanation of the fall of the rocks in Hell (*Inf.* xii. 1–45; xxi. 112–114) from the Franciscan legend, that the chaotic rocks of La Vernia, where St. Francis received the *stigmata*, were upheaved by the earthquake at the Crucifixion.

CHAPTER II

1289-1290

Military service—War with Arezzo—Battle of Campaldino—Victory of Florentine Guelfs—Buonconte da Montefeltro — Siege of Caprona — "Quomodo sedet sola civitas!"

OF Dante's life outside the limits of the *Vita Nuova*, during his first twenty-five years, we get occasional glimpses, which show that, however deeply absorbed he may have been in his devotion to Beatrice, he was yet no "love-sick idler." We find him taking his share in the active duties of family life, and as a patriotic citizen bearing the burden of military service in the field on behalf of the State. In a document dated 1283 (the same year in which he records his first public salutation from Beatrice) his name appears, as the representative of the Alighieri family, in a matter of business which had been left unsettled at the death of his father. Dante at this time was eighteen, and, both his father

and mother being dead, according to Florentine usage was of age. Six years later, we are told, he took part in the war which had broken out in 1287 between Florence and Arezzo, and was present, fighting on the side of the Florentine Guelfs, at their great victory over the Aretines at Campaldino on June 11, 1289. If we are to accept as authentic the fragment of a letter preserved by one of his biographers,[1] this was not Dante's first experience in the field; he confesses, nevertheless, that he was at first greatly afraid, but at the end felt the greatest elation, according to the shifting fortunes of the day.

This battle of Campaldino was an event of no little importance in the history of Florence. If the Aretines had been victorious the position of the Florentine Guelfs would have been seriously endangered. As it was, the result was a crushing blow to the Ghibellines of Tuscany, who had made Arezzo their headquarters, whence during the past few years they had repeatedly raided the Florentine territory. In June 1287 the Aretines, with the help of the exiled Ghibellines

[1] Leonardo Bruni of Arezzo, who was secretary of the Florentine Republic from 1427 till his death in 1444. He claims to have seen several letters of Dante in his own handwriting. In this letter Dante is represented as saying that at the battle of Campaldino he was present "not as a child in arms" ("non fanciullo nell' armi").

from Florence, expelled the Guelfs from their city, whereupon the Florentines, in alliance with the other Guelfs of Tuscany, declared war against Arezzo, and in June of the following year sent a strong expedition into their territory, which ravaged the country right up to the city walls. The Sienese contingent of this expedition, however, rashly allowed themselves to be intercepted by the Aretines, who surprised them and cut them to pieces, the Sienese losing more than three hundred killed and wounded. This success greatly elated the Aretines, and proportionately discouraged the Florentine Guelfs and their allies, who were still further discomfited by the news of the expulsion of the Guelfs from Pisa, and of the imprisonment of the Guelf leader, Ugolino della Gherardesca, who in the following March ($128\frac{8}{9}$) was put to death in the Tower of Famine.[1] Not long after this (at the beginning of May) Charles II. of Anjou passed through Florence on his way to Rome to be crowned King of Naples in succession to his father. After spending three days in Florence, amid great rejoicings, he set out to continue his journey towards Siena. "And when he was departed news came to Florence that the Aretine forces were making ready to enter the Sienese territory in order either to intercept or to bring shame upon Prince Charles,

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 128; *Inferno*, xxxiii.

who had only a small escort of men-at-arms. Immediately the Florentines sent out their cavalry, consisting of the flower of the citizens of Florence and of the mercenaries who were in the city, to the number of eight hundred horsemen, together with three thousand foot, to escort the said Prince; and when the Aretines heard of it they did not dare to go against them. And the Florentines asked the Prince to appoint them a captain of war, and to allow them to carry the royal standard to battle, and the Prince granted it, and he knighted Aimeri of Narbonne, a man very noble and brave, and cunning in war, and gave him to them for their captain. And Aimeri, with his troop of about a hundred horsemen, returned to Florence together with the Florentine force."[1]

No sooner were the Florentines returned home than it was decided without loss of time to send a strong force to attack the Aretines, in order to exact retribution for their continued ravages in the territories of Florence and of the allied Guelfs. On June 2, 1289, the host marched out, with the Guelf banners and the royal standard of King Charles flying, and the bells sounding; "and there were assembled sixteen hundred horsemen and ten thousand foot, whereof six hundred horsemen were citizens of Florence, the best armed and the best mounted that ever went out even

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 130.

from Florence, and four hundred mercenaries together with the men-at-arms of the captain, M. Aimeri, in the pay of the Florentines; and from Lucca there were an hundred and fifty horsemen; and from Prato forty horse and foot; from Pistoja sixty horse and foot; and from Siena an hundred and twenty horsemen; and from Volterra forty horsemen; and from Bologna their envoys with their men-at-arms; and from San Miniato and from San Gemignano, and from Colle, there came horse and foot from each place; and Maghinardo of Susinana,[1] a good and wise captain of war, came with his men from Romagna. And the said host being assembled, they descended into the plain of Casentino, laying waste the lands of Count Guido Novello, who was Podestà of Arezzo. And when the Bishop of Arezzo heard of this, he and the other Ghibelline captains, among whom were many of renown, determined to come with all their force to Bibbiena to prevent its being laid waste; and they were eight hundred horsemen and eight thousand foot, all picked men; and among them were many wise captains of war, the flower of the Ghibellines of Tuscany, and of the March,[2] and of the Duchy,[3] and of

[1] Maghinardo, though a Ghibelline by birth, supported the Florentine Guelfs. His political inconsistency is alluded to by Dante, *Inferno*, xxvii. 51.

[2] Of Ancona. [3] Of Spoleto.

Romagna, all of them experienced in arms and warfare. And they challenged the Florentines to battle, having no fear, although the Florentines had twice as many horsemen as they, but they despised them, saying that they tricked themselves out and combed their tresses like women, laughing at them and holding them of no account. And the Florentines having joyfully accepted the gage of battle, the two hosts by common consent drew up their ranks and faced each other in battle array, more perfectly ordered on both sides than ever were hosts in Italy before this time; and the field of battle was on the plain at the foot of Poppi, in the district called Certomondo, for so the place is named, and a church of the Franciscans which is close by, and the plain is called Campaldino. And this was Saturday morning, the eleventh of June, on the day of St. Barnabas the Apostle." [1]

Among the Florentine horsemen, according to the account of Leonardo Bruni,[2] was Dante, "who fought vigorously on horseback in the front rank, where he was exposed to very grave danger; for the first shock of battle was between the opposing troops of horse, in which the Aretine cavalry charged the Florentine horsemen with

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 131.

[2] Bruni says that Dante in his letter gave an account of the battle, together with a plan

such fury, that they were borne down, broken and routed, and driven back upon the foot-soldiers." This rout of the Florentine cavalry was the cause of the defeat of the Aretines, whose victorious horsemen pursued the fugitives so far that their own foot-soldiers were left unsupported; consequently the Florentines, having rallied their horse, were enabled to crush first the Aretine cavalry and then their foot. Villani gives a detailed account of this important battle—important to us, owing to Dante's presence, in a manner which no one at that time could have foreseen—and of the miraculous way in which the tidings of the victory were brought to Florence.

"M. Aimeri and the other captains of the Florentines drew up their troops in good order, setting an hundred and fifty of the best in the host to fight in the front,[1] of whom twenty were new-made knights, dubbed on the field. And M. Vieri de' Cerchi being one of the captains, and being lame of his leg, he would not on that account be excused from fighting in the front; and it falling to him to make the choice for his Sesto,[2] he would not lay this burden on any who did not desire it of his own free will, but chose himself

[1] It is probable from what Leonardo Bruni says that Dante was among these.

[2] One of the six divisions into which the city of Florence was at this time divided.

and his son and his nephews. And this thing was counted to him as of great merit; and after his good example, and for very shame, many other noble citizens set themselves in the fore-front of the host. And when this was done they flanked each wing with light-armed infantry, and cross-bow-men, and foot-soldiers with long lances; and the main body to the rear of the fore-front was also flanked by foot-soldiers; and in the rear of all was the baggage drawn up so as to support the main body, outside of which were stationed two hundred horse and foot of the Lucchese and the Pistojans and other allies; the captain of these was M. Corso Donati, at that time Podestà of Pistoja, whose orders were, if needful, to take the enemy in flank.

"The Aretines on their side ordered their troops skilfully, inasmuch as they had, as we have said, good captains of war among them; and they set a strong body to fight in the front, to the number of three hundred, among whom were chosen twelve of the chief leaders, whom they styled the twelve paladins.[1] And each side having adopted their war-cry, the Florentines 'Nerbona' and the Aretines 'San Donato,' the fore-front of the

[1] Doubtless in allusion to the fact that they were opposed to Aimeri de Narbonne, a name familiar in the old *Chansons de Geste* as at one time a foe of Charlemagne and afterwards as one of his doughtiest warriors

Aretine horsemen advanced with great daring at full speed to charge the host of the Florentines, and their remaining ranks followed close behind, except that Count Guido Novello, who was in command of a troop of an hundred and fifty horse for a flank attack, did not venture to join battle, but stood his ground, and then took to flight to his own territory.[1] And the charge and attack of the Aretines against the Florentines was to the end that, being confident in their prowess, they might by their bold stroke break the Florentines at the first onset, and put them to flight. So great was the shock that the most part of the Florentine fore-front were unhorsed, and the main body was thrust back some way across the field, but for all that they were not dismayed nor thrown into confusion, but received the enemy steadily and bravely; and with the foot-soldiers drawn up on either flank they closed in on the enemy, fighting desperately for a good while. And M. Corso Donati, who was in charge of the reserve of Lucchese and Pistojans, and had been ordered to stand fast, and not to attack, under pain of death, when he saw the battle begun, said like a brave man: If we lose, I will die in the battle with my

[1] This was the second time that Guido Novello distinguished himself by running away. The first occasion was when he abandoned Florence after the defeat of Manfred at Benevento. (See above, pp. 54–56.)

fellow-citizens; and if we win, let him come who will to Pistoja and exact the penalty; and he boldly moved out his troop, and took the enemy in flank, and was the main cause of their rout.

"After this, as it pleased God, the Florentines had the victory, and the Aretines were routed and defeated; and there were killed more than seventeen hundred, horse and foot, and more than two thousand taken prisoners, whereof many of the best were got away secretly, some by their friends, and others for ransom; but seven hundred and forty of them were brought into Florence in bonds. Among the slain was M. Guglielmino degli Ubertini, Bishop of Arezzo, who was a great warrior, and M. Guglielmo de' Pazzi of Valdarno and his nephews, who was the best and most crafty captain of war of his time in Italy; and there was killed too Buonconte, son of Guido da Montefeltro, and three of the Uberti, and one of the Abati, and many other exiles from Florence. On the side of the Florentines scarce one man of note was slain, but many both of the Florentines and of their allies were wounded.

"The news of this victory came to Florence that very day, at the very hour it took place; for the Priors being gone to sleep and rest after their meal, by reason of their anxiety and watching the night before, suddenly there was a knocking on the door of their chamber, with the cry: Arise,

for the Aretines are defeated; and having risen and opened the door, they found no one, and their servants outside had heard nothing, wherefore it was held to be a great and notable wonder, inasmuch as it was the hour of vespers before any one came from the host with the news. And this was the truth, for I heard it and saw it; and all the Florentines marvelled whence this could have come, and waited in suspense. But when the messengers from the host were come, and brought back the news to Florence, there was great gladness and rejoicing; as well there might be, for at this defeat were left dead many captains and brave men of the Ghibelline party, enemies of the commonwealth of Florence, and the arrogance and pride, not of the Aretines only, was brought down, but of the whole Ghibelline party and of the Empire."[1]

Of those who fought on the same side as Dante in this battle two, Vieri de' Cerchi and the impetuous Corso Donati, were destined to play an important part in the fortunes of Florence, and incidentally in those of Dante himself.

One of the leaders on the opposite side, the Ghibelline Buonconte da Montefeltro, forms the subject of one of the most beautiful episodes in the *Divina Commedia*. Buonconte's body, it seems, was never found after the battle, and Dante, when he meets him in the confines of Purgatory, asks him:

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 131.

"What violence, or what chance, carried thee so far astray from Campaldino, that thy burial-place was never known?" Buonconte replies: "At the foot of the Casentino crosses a stream, named the Archiano; at the place where its name becomes void (*i.e.* at its junction with the Arno) I arrived, pierced in the throat, flying on foot, and staining the plain with blood. There I lost my sight, and my speech finished with the name of Mary, and there I fell, and my flesh alone remained. I will tell the truth, and do thou repeat it among the living. The Angel of God took me, and he of Hell cried out: 'O thou from heaven, why dost thou rob me? Thou bearest away for thyself the eternal part of this one, for one little tear which takes him from me; but of the other part I will make other governance.' Then, when the day was spent, he covered the valley with cloud, from Pratomagno to the great ridge (of the Apennine), and made overcast the heaven above, so that the teeming air was turned to water. The rain fell, and to the trenches came so much of it as the earth did not endure; and as it gathered in great streams it rushed so swiftly towards the royal river that nothing held it back. The swollen Archiano found my body, cold, near its outlet, and thrust it into the Arno, and loosed on my breast the cross which I made of myself when the pain overcame me. It rolled me along its banks, and along the

bottom, then with its spoil it covered me and girt me." [1]

Dante's military experiences did not end, as probably they did not begin, with the battle of Campaldino. In the following August, in consequence of the death of the unhappy Count Ugolino, and of the expulsion of the Guelfs from Pisa, the Tuscan Guelfs, headed by the Florentines and Lucchese, invaded the Pisan territory, and ravaged it for the space of twenty-five days. During this time they laid siege to the castle of Caprona, about five miles from Pisa, which after eight days capitulated. By the terms of the surrender the garrison were allowed to march out under a safe-conduct from the besieging force. Dante tells us in the *Divina Commedia* that he was present on this occasion, and witnessed the alarm of the beleaguered foot-soldiers, as they filed out between their enemies, lest the latter should not keep their compact.[2]

There are other reminiscences in the *Commedia* of Dante's campaigning days. One of these passages, in which he speaks of how "at times a horseman goes out at a gallop from his troop during the charge and seeks to win the honour of the first assault," [3] is pretty certainly a recollection of what took place at the beginning of

[1] *Purgatorio*, v. 91–129.
[2] *Inferno*, xxi. 93–96.
[3] *Purgatorio*, xxiv. 94–96.

the battle of Campaldino. In another passage he gives a vivid picture of the various scenes he must have witnessed during the hostilities between Florence and Arezzo, including the running of the horse-races under the enemy's walls, as the Florentines did before Arezzo the year before Campaldino:[1]—"I have seen ere now horsemen change their ground, and set out to charge, and make their muster, and sometimes fall back in their retreat; I have seen skirmishers overrun your land, men of Arezzo, and I have seen raiders go out, tourneys held, and jousts run, now with trumpets, now with bells, and with drums and with signals from castle-walls."[2] And elsewhere he describes a troop of soldiers manœuvring on the field, how they wheel with the banner at their head, as they change front under cover of their shields.[3]

All these are indications that Dante's military experiences were a very real part of his life, even though they occurred at the very time when, as we know from his own confession in the *Vita Nuova*, his mind was most deeply occupied with the thought of Beatrice and of his love for her. In less than a year after the triumphant return from Campaldino the loss of "his most gentle lady" was to turn gladness into mourning, so

[1] Villani, bk. vii. ch. 120. [2] *Inferno*, xxii. 1–8
[3] *Purgatorio*, xxxii. 19–24.

that, while all the world in Florence was feasting and rejoicing, to Dante, as he sat weeping in his chamber, the city was desolate—"How doth the city sit solitary," he cries with Jeremiah, "she that was full of people! how is she become a widow, she that was great among the nations!"[1]

[1] *Vita Nuova*, §§ 29, 31; Lamentations, i. 1.

CHAPTER III

1291–1300

Early studies—Brunetto Latino—Classical acquirements—Marriage — Gemma Donati — Children — Public life—Embassy to San Gemignano—Priorate.

OF Dante's studies during his early years we know but little for certain. From a misunderstanding of an expression in the *Divina Commedia*[1] it has been assumed that he was a pupil of Brunetto Latino, a Florentine notary and statesman, who was the author of a book called the *Trésor*, a sort of encyclopædia of the knowledge of the day, written in French. Brunetto could not have been Dante's master, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, inasmuch as he

[1] When he meets Brunetto in Hell Dante says to him: "In my mind is fixed the dear and kind fatherly image of you, when in the world you from time to time taught me how man becomes eternal" (*Inferno*, xv. 82–85). This probably means nothing more than that Dante learned much from Brunetto's *Trésor*, and especially from the compendium of the *Ethics* of Aristotle which it contains.

was about fifty-five when Dante was born; besides which he was too constantly occupied with the affairs of the commonwealth to allow of his having leisure for teaching during the years of Dante's boyhood.

Already, when he was only eighteen, Dante had acquired the art of versifying, as he tells us in the *Vita Nuova*.[1] And from the same source we know that he was to some extent practised in drawing, for he relates how on the first anniversary of Beatrice's death, "remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets. And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did: also I learned afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them. Perceiving whom, I arose for salutation, and said: Another was with me. Afterwards, when they had left me, I set myself again to mine occupation, to wit, to the drawing figures of angels." [2]

In letters also, as may be gathered from the *Convivio*, Dante was largely his own instructor. After the death of Beatrice, he says, "I remained

[1] *Vita Nuova*, § 3: "I had already learned of myself the art of setting words in rime."

[2] *Vita Nuova*, § 35 (trans. by Rossetti).

so overwhelmed with grief that no comfort availed me. Howbeit, after some time, my mind, which was striving to regain its health, resolved (since neither mine own nor others' consolation was of any avail) to have recourse to the plan which a certain other disconsolate one had adopted for his consolation. And I set myself to read that book of Boëthius,[1] whose contents are known but to few, wherewith, when a prisoner and in exile, he had consoled himself. And hearing also that Cicero too had written a book, in which, treating of friendship, he had spoken of the consolation of Laelius, that most excellent man, on the death of his friend Scipio, I set myself to read that.[2] And although at first it was hard for me to understand the meaning of them, yet at length I succeeded so far as such knowledge of Latin as I possessed, and somewhat of understanding on my part, enabled me to do. And as it befalls that a man who is in search of silver sometimes, not without divine ordinance, finds gold beyond his expectations, so I, who sought for consolation, found not only healing for my grief, but instruction in the terms used by authors in science and other books."[3]

At the time referred to in this passage Dante was past his twenty-fifth year. It is evident,

[1] The *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. [2] The *De Amicitia*.
[3] *Convivio*, ii. 13.

therefore, that in his early manhood he was by no means far advanced in his classical studies. With Provençal literature, on the other hand, it is probable that he was early familiar, not only from the references in the *Vita Nuova*, but from the fact that the work itself was composed more or less after a Provençal model. From the authors quoted in the *Vita Nuova* (which was written between 1292 and 1295, at any rate when Dante was not more than thirty) it is possible to form a pretty accurate estimate of the extent of his classical acquirements at that period. He shows some familiarity with the *Ethics* and *Metaphysics* of Aristotle (not of course in the original Greek —a language he never knew—but through the medium of Latin translations), and quotes Homer twice, once from the *Ethics* of Aristotle, and once from the *Ars Poëtica* of Horace. Ovid, Lucan, Horace, and Virgil are all quoted directly, the last several times, but there is not much trace of intimate acquaintance with any one of them. Dante also displays a certain knowledge of astronomy in the *Vita Nuova*, Ptolemy being quoted by name, while to the Arabian astronomer, Alfraganus, he was certainly indebted for some of his *data* as to the motions of the heavens, and for his details as to the Syrian and Arabian calendars. If we add to these authors the Bible, which is quoted four or five times, and the works of Cicero

and Boëthius already mentioned, we have practically the range of his reading up to about his thirtieth year, at any rate so far as may be gathered from his writings, which in Dante's case is a fairly safe criterion.

Some of his biographers state that Dante during his early manhood studied at the universities of Bologna and Padua, but there is no evidence to support this statement, which is probably little more than a conjecture.

Within a few years of the death of Beatrice, certainly not later than 1298, Dante married. His wife, whose name was Gemma, was the daughter of Manetto and Maria Donati, of the same ancient and noble Guelf family to which belonged Dante's friend Forese,[1] and the impetuous Corso Donati, who, as we have seen,[2] distinguished himself at the battle of Campaldino. Boccaccio states that Dante's marriage was brought about by his relations in order to console him for the loss of Beatrice, and he further draws a melancholy picture of what he supposes Dante's married life to have been.

"Dante," he says, "formerly had been used to spend his time over his precious studies whenever he was inclined, and would converse with kings and princes, dispute with philosophers, and frequent the company of poets, the burden of whose griefs he

[1] See above, p. 63. [2] See above, pp. 81–82.

would share, and thus solace his own. Now, whenever it pleased his new mistress, he must at her bidding quit this distinguished company, and bear with the talk of women, and to avoid a worse vexation must not only assent to their opinions, but against his inclination must even approve them. He who, whenever the presence of the vulgar herd annoyed him, had been accustomed to retire to some solitary spot, and there to speculate on the motions of the heavens, or the source of animal life, or the beginnings of created things, or, may be, to indulge some strange fancy, or to compose somewhat which after his death should make his name live into future ages—he now, as often as the whim took his new mistress, must abandon all such sweet contemplation, and go in company with those who had little mind for such things. He who had been used to laugh or to weep, to sing or to sigh, according as pleasing or painful thoughts prompted him, now must not dare, or, should he venture, must account to his mistress for every emotion, nay, even for every little sigh. Oh! what unspeakable weariness to have to live day by day, and at last to grow old and die, in the company of such a suspicious being!"

In spite of Boccaccio's express avowal that he cannot positively assert the truth of all this, nevertheless his picture has been accepted seriously by many writers as an accurate

representation of Dante's married life. As a matter of fact there is very little real ground for supposing that Dante lived unhappily with Gemma. The arguments adduced in support of the contention are as follows: — that men of genius are notoriously "gey ill to live with," and consequently, even if Gemma was not the shrew painted by Boccaccio, Dante no doubt was an unbearable companion, wherefore they must have been unhappy together; again, that Dante nowhere in his works makes any reference to his wife; and lastly, that when Dante was exiled from Florence he left Gemma behind him, and, so far as is known, never saw her again. Only one of these arguments has any real weight. The first is based on a pure assumption. If the absence of any reference to Gemma in Dante's works necessarily implies that they lived on bad terms, the same must be assumed in the case of Dante's parents, to whom his references are of the vaguest,[1] and of his children. On the other hand, the fact that Gemma did not subsequently live with Dante, so far as our information goes, when he settled at Ravenna with two of his children, lends some colour to the supposition that the affection between them was not of the

[1] His father and mother are referred to as "i miei generanti" in the *Convivio* (i. 13); and his mother is referred to in the *Inferno* (viii. 45).

strongest. Boccaccio makes the most of this circumstance. He concludes his account of this ill-assorted match, as at any rate he supposed it to have been, with the following words: "Certainly I do not affirm that these things happened in Dante's case, for I do not know. But, at any rate, whether that be the truth or not, once Dante was separated from her who had been given to console him in his grief, he never would come where she was, nor would he ever allow her to come to him."

This is an explicit statement, and it is probable that Boccaccio, who was in communication with members of Dante's family, did not make it without some authority. At any rate, whatever the domestic relations between Dante and Gemma may have been, it is certain that they had a family of four children, all of whom were born in Florence before the year 1302. These children were two sons, Pietro and Jacopo, and two daughters, Antonia and Beatrice. Pietro, the eldest son, who was the author of a commentary on the *Divina Commedia*, became a lawyer, and died in Treviso in 1364.[1] Jacopo, who wrote

[1] Dante's biographer, Leonardo Bruni (1369–1444), says of Pietro: —"Dante, among other children, had a son Pietro, who studied law, and became distinguished. By his own gifts, and as being his father's son, he attained a great position and considerable means, and settled at Verona in

a didactic poem called *Il Dottrinale*, entered the Church, became a canon in the diocese of Verona, and died before 1349. Of Antonia it is only known that she was still alive in 1332. Beatrice became a nun in the convent of Santo Stefano dell' Uliva at Ravenna, where in 1350 she was presented by Boccaccio with the sum of ten gold florins on behalf of the Capitani di Or San Michele of Florence. She died before 1370, in which year there is a record of the payment of a bequest of hers of three gold ducats to the convent where she had passed her days. Three of Dante's children, Pietro, Jacopo, and Beatrice, lived with him during the last three or four years of his life

very good circumstances. This Messer Pietro had a son called Dante, and to this Dante was born a son Leonardo, who is still living and has several children. Not long ago this Leonardo came to Florence, with other young men of Verona, well-to-do and much respected, and came to visit me as a friend to the memory of his great-grandfather Dante. And I showed him the house of Dante and of his ancestors, and gave him information about many things of which he was ignorant, owing to the fact that he and his family had been estranged from the home of their fathers."

Dante, the father of this Leonardo, died in 1428. Leonardo had a son Pietro (d. 1476), who had a son Dante (d. 1515), who had three sons, the youngest of whom, Francesco, died Aug. 12, 1563, and was buried at Verona. With Francesco the male descendants of Dante Alighieri came to an end.

at Ravenna. Gemma, who, as we have seen, is supposed never to have rejoined Dante after his exile from Florence, was still living in 1332, eleven years after Dante's death.

At some period not long after the death of Beatrice Portinari, Dante appears to have been entangled in an amour of a more or less discreditable nature. It seems clear from the language used to Dante by Beatrice in the *Divina Commedia* that this must have been the case. She says that as soon as she was dead and gone, Dante became unfaithful to her, and "gave himself to another," whereby "he fell so low" that she despaired of his salvation.[1] The names of several ladies which occur in Dante's lyrical poems have been connected with this charge; and there can be little doubt that some similar entanglement took place at Lucca after his exile, as appears from the account of Dante's meeting with the Lucchese poet, Bonagiunta, in Purgatory.[2]

In 1295 or 1296, whether before or after his marriage we have no means of ascertaining, Dante, in order to qualify himself for the higher offices in the government of Florence, enrolled himself in the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries, he having now reached the age at which, by the Florentine law, he was entitled to exercise the full rights of citizenship. This was Dante's first

[1] *Purgatorio*, xxx. 127–138. [2] *Purgatorio*, xxiv. 37–45.

step in his political career, which was destined within a few years to lead him into lifelong exile from his native city. The Guild selected by Dante was one of the wealthiest and most important in Florence, concerned as it was with the costly products of the East, in which were included not only spices and drugs, but also pearls, precious stones, and other valuables. Dante's choice of this particular Guild, however, may perhaps be explained by the fact that in those days books also were included among the wares dealt in by apothecaries; and further, to this Guild were attached those who practised the art of painting, an art which, it may be gathered, had especial attractions for Dante, and in which, as we have already seen,[1] he was to some extent a proficient.

A few details of Dante's public life in Florence have been preserved in various documents in the Florentine archives. It is recorded that on July 6, 1295, he gave his opinion in favour of certain proposed modifications of the "Ordinamenti di Giustizia," ordinances against the power of the nobles of Florence, which had been enacted a couple of years before. On December 14 of the same year he took part in the bi-monthly election of Priors; and on June 5, 1296, he spoke in the Council of the Hundred ("Consiglio dei Cento"). In the spring of 1300 he went as ambassador to

[1] See above, p. 89.

SAN GEMIGNANO

San Gemignano, a town about ten miles from Siena, to announce that an assembly was to be held for the purpose of electing a new captain of the Guelf League of Tuscany, and to invite the citizens of San Gemignano to send representatives. The room in the Palazzo of San Gemignano, where Dante was received as ambassador of Florence, and where he spoke in discharge of his office six hundred years ago, is still preserved in much the same condition in which it was on that occasion.

The contemporary record of the event, which, like all similar records of that time, is in Latin, tells how "on May 8 the General Council of the commonwealth and people of San Gemignano having been convoked and assembled in the palace of the said commonwealth by the sounding of a bell and by the voice of the crier, according to custom, at the summons of the noble and valiant knight, Messer Mino de' Tolomei of Siena, the honourable Podestà of the commonwealth and people of the said city of San Gemignano, . . . the noble Dante Alighieri, ambassador of the commonwealth of Florence, explained to the assembled Council on behalf of the said commonwealth how it was expedient at that time for all the cities of the Tuscan League to hold a parliament and discussion in a certain place for the election and confirmation of a new Captain, and how further it was expedient that the appointed syndics and ambassadors of the said cities should assemble

themselves together for the despatch of the said business." It appears that Dante's mission was successful, for the record goes on to state that the proposition of the Florentine ambassador, having been debated, was approved and ratified by the Council.

A few weeks after his return from San Gemignano Dante was elected to serve as one of the six Priors, for the two months from June 15 to August 15, this being the highest office in the Republic of Florence.[1] "From this priorate," says Leonardo Bruni, "sprang Dante's exile from Florence, and all the adverse fortunes of his life, as he himself writes in one of his letters, the words of which are as follows: 'All my woes and all my misfortunes had their origin and commencement with my unlucky election to the priorate; of which priorate although I was not worthy in respect of worldly wisdom, yet in respect of loyalty and of years I was not unworthy of it; inasmuch as ten years had passed since the battle of Campaldino, where the Ghibelline party was almost entirely broken and brought to an end, on which occasion I was present, not inexperienced in arms, and was in great fear, and afterwards greatly exultant, by reason of the varying fortunes of that battle.' These are his words."

[1] The only extant document relating to Dante's priorate is the record of the confirmation on June 15, 1300, of a sentence against three Florentines, who were the creatures of Boniface VIII. (See Del Lungo, *Dal Secolo e dal Poema di Dante*, pp. 371–373.)

CHAPTER IV

1300–1302

Blacks and Whites in Pistoja—In Florence—Cerchi and Donati—May Day 1300—Dante in Office—Embassy to Rome—Charles of Valois in Florence—Triumph of the Blacks—Condemnation and Exile of Dante.

FLORENCE at the time of Dante's election to the priorate was in a dangerous state of ferment owing to the recent introduction from Pistoja of the factions of the Blacks and the Whites, which divided the Guelf party in Florence into two opposite camps, and were the occasion of frequent brawls and bloodshed in the streets.

These factions, according to the old chroniclers, originated in Pistoja in a feud between two branches of the Cancellieri, a Guelf family of that city, who were descended from the same sire, one Ser Cancelliere, but by different mothers. These two branches adopted distinctive names, the one being known as the Cancellieri Bianchi, or White Cancellieri, as being descended from

Cancelliere's wife Bianca, the other as the Cancellieri Neri, or Black Cancellieri. A strong feeling of rivalry existed between the two branches, which at last, as the story is told, on the occasion of a trifling quarrel, broke out into actual hostilities.

It appears that one day the father of a certain Focaccia, who belonged to the White Cancellieri, chastised one of his nephews for assaulting another boy with a snowball. The nephew in revenge a few days after struck his uncle, for which he was sent by his father to receive such punishment as the uncle should see fit to administer. The latter, however, laughed the matter off, and sent the boy away with a kiss. But Focaccia, catching his cousin as he came out of the house, dragged him into the stable and cut off his hand on the manger, and then, not content with this, sought out the boy's father, his own uncle, and murdered him. This atrocious crime naturally led to reprisals, and in a short time the whole city was in an uproar. One half the citizens sided with the Whites, the other half with the Blacks, so that Pistoja was reduced to a state of civil war. To put an end to this state of things the Florentines intervened; and in the hope of extinguishing the feud they secured the leaders of both factions, and imprisoned them in Florence. Unhappily

this measure only led to the introduction of the feud among the Florentines themselves. In Florence also there happened to be two rival families—the Donati, who were of ancient lineage, but in reduced circumstances, and the Cerchi, who were wealthy upstarts. The former, headed by the brave Corso Donati, one of the Guelf leaders at the battle of Campaldino, took the part of the Black Cancellieri, while the Cerchi, headed by Vieri de' Cerchi, who had also distinguished himself on the Guelf side at Campaldino,[1] took the part of the White Cancellieri. Thus it came about that through the private enmities of two Pistojan and two Florentine houses, Florence, which was ostensibly Guelf at the time, became divided into Black Guelfs and White Guelfs. These two divisions, which had originally been wholly unpolitical, by degrees became respectively pure Guelfs and disaffected Guelfs, the latter, the White Guelfs, eventually throwing in their lot with the Ghibellines.

"When the city of Pistoja," says Leonardo Bruni, "was divided into factions by reason of this wicked quarrel, it seemed good to the Florentines, in order to put an end to the trouble, to summon the leaders of both factions to Florence, so that they might not create any further disturbance in

[1] See above, pp. 79–82.

Pistoja. But this remedy was of such sort that it did more harm to the Florentines by drawing the plague upon themselves, than good to the Pistojans by ridding them of the ringleaders in the mischief. For, inasmuch as the latter had many friends and relations in Florence, through their partisanship the conflagration immediately burst out with greater fury in this city than it had done in Pistoja before they quitted it. And as the matter came to be discussed everywhere, in public and in private, the ill seed wondrous quickly took root, and the whole city was divided, so that there was hardly a family, noble or plebeian, but was divided against itself; nor was there a private individual of any consequence who did not join one side or the other. And the division spread even between own brothers, one holding with one faction, and one with the other. And after the dispute had lasted for several months, and disagreements became more frequent, not only in words, but also in angry and harsh deeds, at first between young men, and afterwards between their elders, the city of Florence at last was everywhere in a state of ferment and disturbance."

The degree of jealousy and suspicion with which the Cerchi and Donati, the respective champions of the Whites and Blacks in Florence, regarded each other may be gathered from the

following incident related by a contemporary chronicler:[1]—

"It happened that there was a family who called themselves Cerchi, men of low estate, but good merchants and of great wealth; and they dressed richly, and kept many servants and horses, and made a fine show; and some of them bought the palace of the Conti Guidi, which was close to the houses of the Donati, who were more ancient of blood but not so rich; wherefore seeing the Cerchi rise to great position, and that they had walled and enlarged the palace, and kept great state, the Donati began to have a great hatred against them. Wherefrom great scandal and peril ensued to private persons and to the city at large.

"Now it came to pass one day that many people of the city were gathered together, for the burying of a dead lady, on the Piazza de' Frescobaldi; and it being the custom of the city that at such gatherings the citizens should sit below on rush-bottomed stools, and the knights and doctors above upon benches, the Donati and the Cerchi, such of them as were not knights, being seated on the ground opposite to each other, one of them, either for the purpose of adjusting his dress, or for some other reason, rose to his feet. Whereupon those of the opposite

[1] Dino Compagni, bk. i. ch. 20.

party likewise rose up, suspecting somewhat, and laid their hands on their swords; and the others doing the same, they began to make a brawl. But the rest of those who were present interfered between them, and would not let them come to blows. The disturbance, however, was not so completely quelled but that a large crowd collected at the residence of the Cerchi, and straightway at a word would have made for the Donati, had not some of the Cerchi forbidden it."

The commencement of actual hostilities in Florence between the Blacks and the Whites was due to a street brawl on the evening of May Day in the year 1300—the year of Dante's priorate—between some of these same Cerchi and Donati on the occasion of a dance in the Piazza of Santa Trinita. Two parties of young men on horseback belonging to either side, while looking on, began hustling each other. This soon led to serious fighting, during which one of the Cerchi had his nose cut off.

"At this time (in the year of Christ 1300)," says Villani, "our city of Florence was in the greatest and happiest state it had ever been in since it was rebuilt, or even before, as well in size and power as in the number of her people, for there were more than thirty thousand citizens in the city, and more than seventy thousand fit to bear arms in the districts belonging to her territory; and by

reason of the nobility of her brave knights and of her free people, as well of her great riches, she was mistress of almost the whole of Tuscany.

"But the sin of ingratitude, with the help of the enemy of the human race, out of this prosperity brought forth pride and corruption, whereby the feasting and rejoicings of the Florentines were brought to an end. For up to this time they had been living in peace, in great luxury and delicacy, and with continual banquets; and every year on May Day, through nearly the whole of the city, there were gatherings and companies of men and women, with entertainments and dancing. But now it came about that through envy there arose divisions among the citizens; and the chief and greatest of these began in that quarter of strife, the quarter of Porte San Piero, between those belonging to the house of the Cerchi and those of the Donati, on the one side through envy, on the other through rudeness and ungraciousness.

"The head of the house of the Cerchi was M. Vieri de' Cerchi, and he and his house were men of great consequence, and powerful, with great connections, and very wealthy merchants, for their company was one of the largest in the world; and they were touchy and uncouth, rude in their manners and harsh, after the manner of those who have risen in a short time

to great power and estate. The head of the house of the Donati was M. Corso Donati, and he and his house were of gentle birth, and men of war, with no great wealth.

"And the Cerchi and Donati were neighbours in Florence and in the country, and what with the boorish temper of the one house and the jealousy of the other, there sprang up between them a bitter scorn, which was greatly inflamed by the ill seed of the Black and White parties introduced from Pistoja, for the Cerchi were the heads of the Whites in Florence, and the Donati were the heads of the Blacks. And by the said two parties all the city of Florence and her territory was divided and infected. For which cause the Guelf party, fearing lest these divisions should turn to the advantage of the Ghibellines, sent to Pope Boniface to ask him to heal them. Wherefore the Pope sent for M. Vieri de' Cerchi, and when he was come into his presence, besought him to make peace with M. Corso Donati and his party, and to submit their differences to him, promising to advance him and his friends to a great position, and offering him any spiritual favours he might ask. M. Vieri, although in other matters he was a prudent knight, in this matter showed little wisdom, but was obstinate and touchy, and would do nothing of what the Pope asked him, saying that he had no quarrel

with any man; and so he returned to Florence, and left the Pope very wrathful against him and his party.

"Not long after this it happened that certain of each party were riding on horseback through the city, armed and on the alert, young men of the Cerchi, with some of the Adimari, and others, to the number of more than thirty horsemen, and young men of the Donati, with some of the Pazzi, and others of their following; and it being the evening of May Day in this year 1300, as they were looking on at a dance of ladies which was being held in the Piazza of Santa Trinita, one party began to provoke the other, and to push their horses one against the other, whence there arose a great scuffle and uproar, and several were wounded, and by ill-luck Ricoverino, son of M. Ricovero de' Cerchi, had his nose cut from off his face; and by reason of the scuffle that evening the whole city was in alarm and under arms.

"And this was the beginning of the dissensions and divisions in the city of Florence and in the Guelf party, wherefrom ensued much evil and great danger to the Guelf party and to the Ghibellines, and to all the city of Florence, and to the whole of Italy also. And in like manner as the death of M. Buondelmonte was the beginning of the Guelf and Ghibelline parties in Florence, so was this the beginning

of the great ruin of the Guelf party and of our city."[1]

In consequence of the repeated disturbances caused by the quarrels between the Blacks and the Whites, during Dante's priorate it was decided to banish from Florence the leaders of both parties, in the hope of restoring the city to peace and quiet. Among the leaders of the Whites was the poet, Guido Cavalcanti, Dante's earliest friend. It thus came about that in the impartial exercise of his office Dante was instrumental in sending his dearest friend into exile, and, as it proved, to his death; for, though the exiles were recalled after a few weeks, Guido never recovered from the effects of the malarious climate of Sarzana in Lunigiana, to which he had been banished, and died in Florence at the end of August in the same year (1300).[2]

The feuds between the two factions now reached such a height that, as we have seen, the interference of Pope Boniface was invoked, and at this time the Blacks were clamouring for Charles of Valois, brother of the King of France,

[1] Villani, bk. viii. ch. 39.

[2] From Guido's last poem, written at Sarzana during his exile, it is evident that he never expected to return. If certain expressions in this poem are to be taken literally, it would appear that Guido already felt the hand of death upon him.

to come to Florence as the Pope's representative. The Whites, on the other hand, to which faction Dante himself belonged, were bitterly opposed both to Boniface and to Charles of Valois.

In April of the next year (1301), in the midst of these troubles, Dante was entrusted with the charge of superintending the works on the street of San Procolo, which were intended to facilitate the bringing of troops from the outside districts into the city. On June 19 in this year Dante voted in the Council of the Hundred against the proposal to supply a contingent of a hundred soldiers to serve with the Papal forces, on the requisition of Pope Boniface;—"Dante Alighieri," the record runs, "advised that in the matter of furnishing assistance to the Pope, nothing should be done." He recorded his vote on various matters several times in one or other of the Councils during the month of September, the last of which mention is preserved being on September 28. In the following October, in order to protest against the Papal policy, which aimed at the virtual subjection of Florence, and if possible to avert the coming of Charles of Valois, the Whites sent an embassy to Rome, of which Dante was a member. But while Dante was still absent at Rome, the Pope's "peacemaker" Charles arrived in Florence, which he entered on All Saints' Day (November 1, 1301), his entrance having been

unopposed, on the faith of his promise to hold the balance between the two parties, and to maintain peace. No sooner, however, had he obtained command of the city, than he treacherously espoused the cause of the Blacks, armed his followers, and threw the whole of Florence into confusion. In the midst of the panic Corso Donati, one of the exiled leaders of the Blacks, made his way into the city, broke open the prisons and released the prisoners, who, together with his own adherents, attacked and pillaged the houses of the Whites during five days, Charles of Valois meanwhile, in spite of his promises, making no attempt to interfere.

The Blacks having thus gained the upper hand in Florence began without delay to strengthen themselves by getting rid of their opponents. On January 27, 1302, the Podestà, Cante de' Gabrielli of Gubbio, pronounced a sentence against Dante and four other Whites, who had been summoned before the Podestà and had failed to appear. The charge against them was the infamous one of "barratry," that is, of fraud and corrupt practices in office, including the extortion of money and the making of illicit gains. They were further charged with having conspired against the Pope, against the admission into the city of his representative, Charles of Valois, and against the peace of the city of

Florence and of the Guelf party. The penalty was a fine of five thousand florins, and the restitution of the sums illegally exacted; payment was to be made within three days of the promulgation of the sentence, in default of which all their goods were to be forfeited and destroyed. In addition to the fine, the delinquents were sentenced to banishment from Tuscany for two years, and to perpetual deprivation from office in the commonwealth of Florence, their names to that end being recorded in the book of the Statutes of the People, as peculators and malversators in office.

This sentence having been disregarded, on March 10 in the same year a second severer sentence was pronounced against Dante and the others (with whom ten more were now included), condemning them to be burned alive[1] should they ever be caught: "if any of the aforesaid at any time should come into the hands of the said Commonwealth, such an one shall be burned with fire so that he die."

That Dante was entirely innocent of the charge of corruption brought against him there can hardly be the smallest doubt. It was merely a base

[1] That burning alive was no uncommon punishment in those days, as in later times, is evident from the fact that in an old Sienese inventory occurs the entry "due pezzi di catene da ardere huomini."

device on the part of his enemies within the city to disqualify him and the rest of the Whites from taking any further part in the government of Florence. None of his early biographers believes in his guilt, while his contemporary and fellow-citizen, the chronicler, Giovanni Villani, who belonged to the opposite party, states frankly that he was driven into exile for no other fault than that of being an adherent of the Whites. "The said Dante," he says, "was one of the chief magistrates of our city, and was of the White party, and a Guelf withal; and on that account, without any other fault, with the said White party he was driven out and banished from Florence."[1]

[1] Villani, bk. ix. ch. 136.

CAST OF DANTE'S FACE TAKEN AFTER DEATH

PART III

DANTE IN EXILE

CHAPTER I

1302–1321

Wanderings—Dante's fellow-exiles—Henry VII. in Italy—His death—Fresh sentence against Dante—His retirement to Ravenna—Death and burial.

NEVER again after the sentence of banishment pronounced against him by Cante de' Gabrielli did Dante set foot within the walls of his native city. The rest of his life, nearly twenty years, was spent in exile, and for the most part in poverty, such as is foretold to him by his ancestor Cacciaguida in the Heaven of Mars :— "Thou shalt leave every thing beloved most dearly; and this is the shaft which the bow of exile first lets fly. Thou shalt prove how salt the taste is of another's bread, and how hard

a path it is to go down and up another's stairs." [1]

In a passage at the beginning of the *Convivio* Dante gives a pathetic account of the miseries and mortifications he endured during his wanderings as an exile. "Alas," he says, "would it had pleased the Dispenser of the Universe that I should never have had to make excuses for myself; that neither others had sinned against me, nor I had suffered this punishment unjustly, the punishment I say of exile and of poverty! Since it was the pleasure of the citizens of the fairest and most renowned daughter of Rome, Florence, to cast me out from her most sweet bosom (wherein I was born and brought up to the climax of my life, and wherein I long with all my heart, with their good leave, to repose my wearied spirit, and to end the days allotted to me), wandering as a stranger through almost every region to which our language reaches, I have gone about as a beggar, showing against my will the wound of fortune, which is often wont to be imputed unjustly to the fault of him who is stricken. Verily I have been as a ship without

[1] *Paradiso*, xvii. 55–60. It is most natural to suppose that among the "things beloved most dearly" left behind in Florence Dante intended to include his wife. But this is not admitted by those who hold that Dante's marriage was an unhappy one.

sails and without rudder, driven to various harbours and shores by the dry wind which blows from pinching poverty. And I have appeared vile in the eyes of many, who, perhaps from some report of me, had imagined me in a different guise." [1]

Elsewhere, in another of his works, he expresses his pity for those who, like himself, languish in exile, and revisit their home only in their dreams.[2]

Of Dante's movements from the time of his banishment very little is known for certain. Leonardo Bruni says that when the tidings of his ruin reached him at Rome, he hastened back to Tuscany and went to Siena, where he learned further particulars of his sentence, and consequently determined to make common cause with the other exiles. He certainly appears at first to have thrown in his lot with the rest, and to have looked, like them, to a return to Florence by forcible means. To this end they assembled at Gargonza, a castle of the Ubertini between Arezzo and Siena, and decided to enter into an alliance with the Ghibellines of Tuscany and Romagna, fixing their headquarters at Arezzo, where they remained until 1304. Dante, at any rate, was present at a meeting of the exiles, held on June 8, 1302, in the church of San Godenzo, in the Tuscan Apennines, about twenty miles from Florence, when a convention was

[1] *Convivio*, i. 3 [2] *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ii. 6.

entered into with the Ubaldini, the ancient enemies of Florence.

In the prophecy of Cacciaguida, already referred to, Dante is warned that what should gall him most would be the folly and wickedness of the company into which he should be thrown; and it is foretold to him that he should after a while dissociate himself from the rest of the exiles, and make a party for himself.[1] At what particular juncture Dante did dissociate himself from his fellow-exiles we cannot tell. It was probably before the summer of 1304, for in July of that year the exiles, disappointed in their expectations of a peaceable return to Florence through the mediation of Cardinal Niccolò da Prato, the legate of Benedict XI. (who had recently succeeded Boniface VIII.), made an abortive attempt from Lastra, in concert with the Pistojans, to effect an entry into the city—an attempt from which Dante appears to have held aloof.

There is evidence of his having been at Forlì in 1303, and it was doubtless about this time that he separated himself from "the worthless and vile company" of his fellow-exiles; not long after which he took refuge with one of the Scaliger family, most probably Bartolommeo della Scala, at Verona, which Cacciaguida foretells to him as his "first refuge."[2] "Here," writes Leonardo Bruni, "he

[1] *Paradiso*, xvii. 61–69. [2] *Paradiso*, xvii. 70–72.

was very courteously received, and remained some time, being now become very humble and seeking by good deeds and good behaviour to win back the favour of being allowed to return to Florence by a spontaneous recall from the Government of the city. To this end he laboured much, and wrote many times, not only to individual members of the Government, but also to the people; and amongst the rest was a long letter beginning, 'My people, what have I done to you?'"[1]

How long Dante remained at Verona is not known. It is impossible, for lack of information, to follow him with any certainty in his wanderings, which, as he records in the above-quoted passage of the *Convivio*, took him into nearly every part of Italy. There is reason to believe, from a legal document still in existence, that he was at Padua on August 27, 1306; and from another it is known that he was shortly after (on October 6 in the same year) at Sarzana in Lunigiana as agent for the Malaspini, where he was the guest of Franceschino Malaspina. This visit to the Malaspini, "the honoured race which ceases not to be adorned with the glory of the purse and of the sword," is foretold to Dante by Currado Malaspina, Franceschino's first cousin, whom he meets in Purgatory.[2] Dante on this occasion acted as

[1] No other trace of this letter has been preserved.

[2] *Purgatorio*, viii. 118–134.

procurator for the Malaspini family in their negotiations for peace with their neighbour, the Bishop of Luni, which by Dante's means was successfully concluded. The duration of his stay in Lunigiana is uncertain, but it probably did not last beyond the summer of 1307.

His movements during the next few years are largely a matter of conjecture. Some of his biographers state that he went from Lunigiana to the Casentino (the upper valley of the Arno above Florence) and to Forlì again, and returned once more to Lunigiana[1] on his way to Paris. That Dante visited Paris during his exile is stated both

[1] To this period (about 1308) is usually assigned Dante's supposed visit to the Camaldolese Monastery of Santa Croce del Corvo in Lunigiana, an account of which is given in a letter (of doubtful authenticity) from Frate Ilario, one of the monks, to the Ghibelline leader, Uguccione della Faggiuola. According to the writer, Dante presented himself at the monastery, and, being asked what he sought, answered "Peace." The monk then entered into conversation with Dante, who presently produced a book (the *Inferno*) from his bosom, and gave it to him with a request that he would forward it to Uguccione, adding that if Uguccione desired to see the other two parts of the poem, he would find them in the hands of the Marquis Moroello Malaspina and King Frederick of Sicily (to whom respectively the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* are said to have been dedicated). This letter has long been regarded as a forgery, possibly from the hand of Boccaccio. But recent investigations have proved that at any rate Boccaccio cannot have forged it, and there is now a tendency to accept it as genuine.

by Boccaccio and by Villani in his chronicle,[1] but at what precise period this visit took place it is impossible to say. Some are inclined to believe, from a phrase in a Latin poem addressed to Petrarch by Boccaccio, that Dante came to England; and it is even stated by Giovanni da Serravalle, a fifteenth-century writer, that he studied in the University of Oxford, but this is extremely doubtful.

There seems little doubt that Dante was in Italy between September 1310 and January 1311, when he addressed a letter to the Princes and Peoples of Italy on the advent of the Emperor Henry VII. into Italy, — the Emperor through whose means Dante hoped to be restored to Florence. "Lo! now is the acceptable time," he writes, "wherein arise the signs of consolation and peace. For a new day is beginning to break, showing forth the dawn, which even now is dispersing the darkness of our long night of tribulation; already the breezes from the East are springing up, the face of the heavens grows rosy, and confirms the hopes of the peoples with a peaceful calm. And we too, who have long kept vigil through the night in the desert, we too shall behold the looked-for joy." [2]

He was certainly in Tuscany (probably as the guest of Guido Novello of Battifolle at the

[1] Bk. ix. ch. 136. [2] *Epistola* v.

castle of Poppi in the Casentino) when he wrote his terrible letter to the Florentines, dated "from the springs of the Arno," March 31, 1311, after he learned that they were preparing to resist the Emperor by force. In this letter,[1] which is headed "Dante Alighieri, a Florentine and undeservedly an exile, to the most iniquitous Florentines within the city," he uses no measured terms, and does not hesitate to threaten the Florentines with the direct vengeance of the Emperor. "You," he thunders, "you, who transgress every law of God and man, and whom the insatiable maw of avarice urges headlong into every crime, does not the dread of the second death haunt you, seeing that you first and you alone, refusing the yoke of liberty, have set yourselves against the glory of the Roman Emperor, the king of the earth, and the servant of God? The hope which you vainly cherish in your madness will not be furthered by this rebellion of yours, but by your resistance the just wrath of the king at his coming will be but the more inflamed against you. If my prophetic spirit be not deceived, your city, worn out with long sufferings, shall be delivered at the last into the hands of the stranger, after the greatest part of you has been destroyed in death or in captivity, and the few

[1] *Epistola* vi.

that shall be left to endure exile shall witness her downfall with weeping and lamentation."

From the same place a few weeks later (on April 16), Dante addressed a letter to the Emperor himself, who was at that time besieging Cremona, urging him to lay everything else aside, and to come and crush without further delay the viper Florence, as the most obstinate and dangerous rebel against the Imperial authority. From this letter it appears that Dante had been present at the coronation of Henry with the iron crown at Milan, on the day of Epiphany (January 6, 1311), when ambassadors were sent from nearly every city of Italy, except Florence and her allies. "I too, who write for myself as well as for others, have beheld thee most gracious, as beseems Imperial Majesty, and have heard thee most clement, when my hands touched thy feet, and my lips paid their tribute." [1]

On September 2 of this same year (1311) was issued at Florence a proclamation (known as the "Riforma di Messer Baldo d'Aguglione," from the name of the Prior who was responsible for it), offering pardon to a portion of the Florentine exiles, but expressly excepting certain others by name. Among these names was that of Dante Alighieri, whose exclusion was

[1] *Epistola* vii.

no doubt largely due to the letters mentioned above, and to his active sympathy with the Imperial cause. To this proclamation the Emperor issued a counterblast in the following December from Genoa, in the shape of an edict declaring Florence to be outside the pale of the Empire, which was followed by another from Poggibonsi in February 1313, containing the names of more than six hundred Florentine citizens and subjects, who were branded as rebels.

Nothing is known of Dante's whereabouts during these years of deferred hopes and disappointments. Leonardo Bruni states, apparently on the authority of a letter of Dante's which has not been preserved, that when the Emperor advanced against Florence and laid siege to the city (in the autumn of 1312), Dante out of reverence for his native place would not accompany him, although he had urged him to the attack. Dante had scoffed at the idea that the Florentines could stand up against the Imperial host. "Do you trust," he had written in the letter already quoted,[1] "do you trust in your defence, because you are girt by a contemptible rampart? What shall it avail you to have girt you with a rampart, and to have fortified yourselves with bulwarks and with

[1] *Epistola* vi.

battlements,[1] when, terrible in gold, the eagle shall swoop down upon you, which soaring now over the Pyrenees, now over Caucasus, now over Atlas, borne up by the breath of the soldiery of heaven, gazed down of old upon the vast expanse of ocean in its flight?"

But the Imperial eagle was obliged to retire baffled, leaving the viper uncrushed; and in the following year, while the Emperor was marching southward against Naples, he was suddenly seized with sickness at Buonconvento near Siena, where he died on August 24, 1313. The news of his death was received with savage exultation by the Florentines. To Dante it meant the final abandonment of any hope of a return to Florence. "On the Emperor Henry's death," writes Bruni, "every hope of Dante's was utterly destroyed; for he had himself closed up the way to forgiveness by his abusive writings against the government of the commonwealth; and there was no longer any hope of return by force."

Where Dante was when the fatal news reached

[1] "The Florentines," says Villani, "fearing the coming of the Emperor, resolved to enclose the city with moats from the Porta San Gallo to the Porta Santo Ambrogio, and thence to the Arno; and then from the Porta San Gallo to the Porta dal Prato d'Ognissanti, where the walls were already begun, they had them raised eight cubits. And this work was done at once and very quickly; and it was without doubt the salvation of the city, for it had been all open, the old walls having been in great part pulled down, and the materials sold" (bk. ix. ch. 10).

him, and what his movements were at this time, is not known. After the death of Clement v., on April 20, 1314, Dante addressed a letter[1] to the Italian cardinals in conclave at Carpentras, rebuking them for their backslidings and corruption, and calling upon them to make amends by electing an Italian Pope, who should restore the Papal See to Rome. At some date subsequent to June 14 of that year, when Lucca fell into the hands of the Ghibelline captain, Uguccione della Faggiuola, Dante appears to have been in that city; and it has been conjectured that it may have been during this stay that he formed the attachment for a Lucchese lady named Gentucca, which is supposed to be alluded to by Buonagiunta in Purgatory.[2] What was the real nature of his relations with this lady, who has been identified with a certain Gentucca Morla, wife of Cosciorino Fondora of Lucca, we have no means of ascertaining.

In August 1315, the Ghibellines, under the leadership of Uguccione della Faggiuola, completely defeated the Florentines and Tuscan Guelfs at Monte Catini, between Lucca and Pistoja. This event was followed by a fresh sentence from Florence against the exiled Whites. In this sentence, which is dated November 6, 1315, Dante and those named with him, includ-

[1] *Epistola* viii. [2] *Purgatorio*, xxiv. 37, 43–45.

ing Dante's sons this time, were branded as Ghibellines and rebels, and condemned, if captured, "to be taken to the place of justice (*i.e.* the place of public execution), and there to have their heads struck from their shoulders, so that they die outright." In the next year, however, an amnesty was proclaimed by Count Guido of Battifolle, the Vicar in Florence of the Guelf Protector, King Robert of Naples, and permission was granted to the majority of the exiles to return to Florence, under certain degrading conditions, including the payment of a fine and the performance of penance in the Baptistery. From this amnesty all the exiles who had been originally condemned by the Podestà, Cante de' Gabrielli, among whom of course was Dante, were expressly excluded. Many of the exiles appear to have accepted the terms; but Dante, who seems at first to have been unaware of his exclusion, scornfully rejected them.

"Is this, then," he writes to a friend in Florence, "is this the glorious recall of Dante Alighieri to his native city, after the miseries of nearly fifteen years of exile? Is this the reward of innocence manifest to all the world, of unceasing sweat and toil in study? Far be it from the friend of philosophy, so senseless a degradation, befitting only a soul of clay, as to submit himself to be paraded like a prisoner, as some

infamous wretches have done! Far be it from the advocate of justice, after being wronged, to pay tribute to them that wronged him, as though they had deserved well of him! No! this is not the way for me to return to my country. If another can be found which does not derogate from the fame and honour of Dante, that will I take with no lagging steps. But if by no such way Florence may be entered, then will I re-enter Florence never. What! can I not everywhere gaze upon the sun and the stars? can I not under any sky meditate on the most precious truths, without first rendering myself inglorious, nay ignominious, in the eyes of the people and city of Florence? Nay, bread will not fail me!" [1]

After again seeking shelter with the Scaligers at Verona, this time as the guest of Can Grande della Scala, Dante, on the invitation of Guido Novello da Polenta, went to Ravenna (probably in 1317 or 1318), "where," says Boccaccio, "he was honourably received by the lord of that city, who revived his fallen hopes with kindly encouragement, and, giving him abundantly such things as he needed, kept him there at his court for many years, nay, even to the end of his days." At Ravenna, his last refuge, where his sons Pietro and Jacopo and his daughter Beatrice resided with him, Dante appears to have lived in

[1] *Epistola* ix.

congenial company; and here he put the finishing touches to his "sacred poem," the *Divina Commedia*, his work upon which he tells us "had made him lean for many years." [1]

Boccaccio states that at Ravenna many scholars came to Dante for instruction in the poetic art, especially in vernacular poetry, which he first brought into repute among Italians. While he was here, after the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* had been completed and made public, Dante was invited by a poet and professor of Bologna, Giovanni del Virgilio, in a Latin eclogue, to come and receive the laurel crown at Bologna. This invitation Dante declined, the laurel having no attraction for him unless conferred by his own fellow-citizens in the same Baptistery where as a child he had received the name which he was to make so famous.

At the end of 1319 or beginning of 1320 Dante appears to have paid a visit to Mantua, on which occasion a discussion was started as to the relative levels of land and water on the surface of the globe. Dante subsequently wrote a treatise on the subject (if we may trust the evidence of the treatise *De Aqua et Terra* traditionally ascribed to him), which was delivered as a public dissertation at Verona, on January 20, 1320.

In the summer of 1321, a difference having arisen between Ravenna and Venice, on account

[1] *Paradiso*, xxv. 1–3.

of an affray in which several Venetian sailors were killed, Guido da Polenta sent an embassy to the Doge of Venice, of which Dante was a member. The ambassadors were ill received by the Venetians, who, it is said, refused them permission to return by sea, and obliged them to make the journey overland along the malarious seaboard. The consequences to Dante were fatal, for he contracted a fever (as is supposed) on the way, and, growing worse after his return to Ravenna, died in that city on September 14, 1321, aged fifty-six years and four months.[1] At Ravenna Dante was buried, and there his remains still rest, in spite of repeated efforts on the part of Florence to secure possession of "the metaphorical ashes of the man of whom they had threatened to make literal cinders if they could catch him alive." [2]

[1] Boccaccio in his comment on the opening line of the *Commedia*, has an interesting note as to Dante's age at the time of his death, which proves incidentally how carefully Boccaccio made his inquiries with regard to the details of Dante's life. "That Dante was thirty-five," he says, "at the time when he first awakened to the error of his ways is confirmed by what was told me by a worthy man, named Ser Piero, son of M. Giardino of Ravenna, who was one of Dante's most intimate friends and servants at Ravenna. He affirmed that he had it from Dante, while he was lying sick of the illness of which he died, that he had passed his fifty-sixth year by as many months as from the previous May to that day. And it is well known that Dante died on the fourteenth day of September in the year 1321" (*Comento*, i. 104–105).

[2] J. R. Lowell.

"The noble knight, Guido da Polenta," writes Boccaccio, "placed the dead body of Dante, adorned with the insignia of a poet, upon a funeral bier, and caused it to be borne upon the shoulders of his most reverend citizens to the place of the Minor Friars in Ravenna, with such honour as he deemed worthy of the illustrious dead. And having followed him to this place, in the midst of public lamentation, Guido had the body laid in a sarcophagus of stone, wherein it reposes to this day. Afterwards, returning to the house where Dante had formerly lived, according to the custom of Ravenna, Guido himself pronounced a long and ornate discourse, as well in commendation of the great learning and virtue of the dead man, as for the consolation of his friends whom he had left to mourn him in bitter sorrow. And Guido purposed, had his estate and life endured, to honour Dante with so splendid a tomb, that if no other merit of his had kept his name alive among future generations, this memorial alone would have preserved it. This laudable purpose was in a brief space made known to certain who at that time were the most renowned poets in Romagna; so that each, not only to exhibit his own powers, but also to testify to the love he bore toward the dead poet, and to win the grace and favour of the lord Guido, who they were aware had this at heart—

each, I say, composed an epitaph in verse for inscription on the tomb that was to be, which with fitting praise should make known to posterity what manner of man he was who lay within. And these verses they sent to the illustrious lord, who through the evil stroke of Fortune not long after lost his estate and died at Bologna; on which account the making of the tomb and the inscription of the verses thereon was left undone."

Dante's burial-place, left incomplete owing to the misfortunes which overtook Guido da Polenta, appears to have gradually fallen into decay. It was restored in 1483 by Bernardo Bembo, who was at that time Praetor of the Venetian Republic in Ravenna. Much of the work executed by Bembo's directions, including the marble relief of Dante reading at a desk, remains to this day. It was a second time restored, more than two hundred years later (in 1692) by Cardinal Domenico Maria Corsi, the Papal legate; and a third time, in 1780, by Cardinal Gonzaga, who erected the mausoleum, surmounted with a dome, as it now stands.

S V E
PVRA MEONIARCHIAE VETEROS HELICE IONIA LACVSQVE
IVSTRANDO CECINIT QVONDAM VNIVERSA POESIS
SED QVIA PARS CESSIT MELIORIBVS HOSTIA CASTRIS
AD TELAM CVI SVVM PETIIT FELICIOR ASTRIS
HIC CLAVDOR DANTES PATRIIS EXTORRIS AB ORIS
QVEM GENVIT PARVIS FLORENTIA MATER AMORIS

DANTE'S TOMB AT RAVENNA

CHAPTER II

Boccaccio's rebuke to the Florentines—Efforts of Florence to get possession of Dante's remains—Leo x. grants permission for their removal—Disappearance of the remains—Their accidental discovery during the commemoration of the sixth centenary of Dante's birth—Public exhibition of them at Ravenna, and subsequent re-interment.

THE history of Dante's remains from the time of their burial by Guido da Polenta in 1321 is a most curious one, and shows how jealously the people of Ravenna guarded the treasure which had been deposited in their keeping. Boccaccio, in a chapter of his *Life of Dante*, headed, "A Rebuke to the Florentines," reproaches them with their treatment of Dante, and urges them at least to recall his dead body from exile, adding, however, that he feels sure their request for his remains would be refused.

"Oh! ungrateful country," he exclaims, "what madness, what blindness possessed you to drive out your most valued citizen, your chiefest

benefactor, your one poet, with such unheard-of cruelty, and to keep him in exile? If perchance you excuse yourself on the ground of the common fury of that time, why, when your anger was appeased and your passion abated, and you repented you of your act, why did you not recall him? Alas! your Dante Alighieri died in that exile to which you, envious of his merit, unjustly sent him. Oh! unspeakable shame, that a mother should regard with jealousy the virtues of her own son! Now you are freed from that disquietude, now he is dead you live secure amid your own imperfections, and can put an end to your long and unjust persecutions. He cannot in death do to you what he never in life would have done; he lies beneath another sky than yours, nor do you ever expect to behold him again, save on that day when you shall see once more all your citizens, whose iniquities by the just Judge shall be visited and rewarded. If then, as we believe, all hatred, and anger, and enmity cease at the death of whoso dies, do you now begin to return to your old self, and to your right mind; begin to think with shame of how you acted contrary to your ancient humanity; prove yourself now a mother, and no longer a foe, and grant to your son the tears that are his due, and show to him the love of a mother; seek at least to regain him in death, whom when alive you rejected, nay

drove out as a malefactor, and restore to his memory the citizenship, the welcome, the grace you denied to himself. Of a truth, although you were wayward and ungrateful to him, he always revered you as a mother, and, though you deprived him of your citizenship, yet did he never seek to deprive you of the glory which from his works must ensue to you. A Florentine always, in spite of his long exile, he called himself, and would be called, always preferring you and loving you. What then will you do? Will you for ever remain stiff-necked in your injustice? Will you show less humanity than the pagans, who, we read, not only begged back the bodies of their dead, but were ever ready to meet death like heroes in order to get them back? Who doubts that the Mantuans, who to this day reverence the poor hut and the fields that once were Virgil's, would have bestowed on him honourable burial had not the Emperor Augustus transported his bones from Brundusium to Naples, and ordained that city as their last resting-place?

"Do you then seek to be the guardian of your Dante. Ask for him back again, making a show of this humanity, even if you do not desire to have him back; with this pretence at least you will rid yourself of a part of the reproach you have so justly incurred. Ask for him back again! I am certain he will never be given back to you,

and thus you will at once have made a show of compassion, and, being refused, may yet indulge your natural cruelty!

"But to what do I urge you? Hardly do I believe, if dead bodies have any feeling, that Dante's body would remove from where it now lies, in order to return to you. He lies in company more honourable than any you can offer him. He lies in Ravenna, a city by far more venerable in years than yourself; and though in her old age she shows somewhat of decay, yet in her youth she was by far more flourishing than you are now. She is, as it were, a vast sepulchre of holy bodies, so that no foot can anywhere press her soil, without treading above the most sacred ashes. Who then would wish to return to you and be laid amongst your dead, who, one must believe, still retain the evil passions they cherished in their lifetime, and fly one from the other, carrying their enmities into the grave?

"Ravenna, bathed as she is in the most precious blood of numberless martyrs, whose remains she to this day preserves with the greatest reverence, as she does the bodies of many high and mighty emperors and other men of high renown, either for their long ancestry or for their noble deeds, Ravenna, I say, rejoices not a little that it has been granted to her of God, in addition to her other privileges, to be the perpetual guardian of so great

a treasure as the body of him whose works are the admiration of the whole world, him of whom you knew not how to be worthy. But of a surety, her pride in possessing Dante is not so great as her envy of you by whose name he called himself; for she grieves that she will be remembered only on account of his last day, while you will be famous on account of his first. Persist then in your ingratitude, while Ravenna, decked with your honours, shall boast herself to the generations to come!"

Boccaccio was a true prophet. Five times the Florentines begged Ravenna to return to his native city the ashes of their great poet, each time in vain.

The first request was made in 1396, three-quarters of a century after Dante's death. On this occasion it was proposed to erect monuments in the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore to five illustrious citizens of Florence, viz., Accursius the great legist, Dante, Petrarch, Zenobio da Strada, and Boccaccio (the names being mentioned in that order in the official document), and it was resolved to secure if possible their mortal remains, doubtless for honourable interment at the same time. The petition for Dante's remains was refused by the Polenta family, the then lords of Ravenna; and a second request, preferred on similar grounds some thirty years later (1429), was likewise refused.

A third attempt appears to have been made in 1476, when interest was made with the Venetian ambassador (presumably Bernardo Bembo) by Lorenzo de' Medici; but, though the ambassador promised compliance, nothing was done, and the hopes of Florence were once more disappointed.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century a fourth and most determined attempt was made by the Florentines to get possession of Dante's remains, an attempt which had very remarkable consequences. From a letter written by Cardinal Pietro Bembo in June 1515, it appears that Pope Leo x., who belonged to the Medici family of Florence (he was the son of Lorenzo), and was also by virtue of the league of Cambrai (1509) lord of Ravenna, had granted or promised to the Florentines permission to remove the poet's remains from Ravenna. Four years later (in 1519) a formal memorial was presented to Leo by the Medicean Academy, urging that the removal should be carried out, among the signatories being one of the Portinari, a descendant of the family to which Beatrice belonged. This memorial was endorsed by the great sculptor, Michel Angelo, who expressed his willingness to design and himself execute a fitting sepulchre. Leo granted the request of the Academicians, and forthwith a mission was despatched to Ravenna to bring back Dante's bones to Florence. But meanwhile the custodians of

the poet's remains had taken the alarm, and when the tomb was opened by the Florentine envoys nothing was to be seen but some fragments of bone and a few withered laurel leaves, the relics no doubt of the poet's crown which was laid upon the bier at the time of burial. In an account of the proceedings submitted to Leo the following "explanation" was offered of the disappearance of the remains: "The much wished-for translation of Dante's remains did not take place, inasmuch as the two delegates of the Academy who were sent for the purpose found Dante neither in soul nor in body; and it is supposed that, as in his lifetime he journeyed in soul and in body through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, so in death he must have been received, body and soul, into one of those realms."

There is little doubt that Dante's bones, which were still intact in 1483 when Bernardo Bembo restored the tomb, were secretly removed by the Franciscans in charge, between 1515 and 1519, the period when the question of their translation to Florence was being agitated by the Medicean Academy, armed with the permission of Leo x.

The secret of their disappearance was well kept in Ravenna. Two hundred and sixty years later (in 1782) the tomb was once more restored, and, at the inauguration by Cardinal Valentino Gonzaga, it was opened for the purpose of verifying the

remains. The official account of the proceeding was couched in vague terms, which were obviously intended to conceal the fact that the tomb was found to be empty. An unofficial account, however, in the shape of an entry by one of the Franciscan monks in his missal, which has been preserved at Ravenna, contains the bald statement that "Dante's sarcophagus was opened and nothing was found inside, whereupon it was sealed up again with the Cardinal's seal, and silence was observed as to the whole matter, thus leaving the old opinion (as to the presence of the remains) undisturbed."

The secret of the removal of the remains was still preserved from the public, but that it was known to a select few is evident from the fact that sixty years after the above incident Filippo Mordani, in his memoir of Dionigi Strocchi, records that the latter said to him on July 1, 1841: "I wish to tell you something, now that we are alone. The tomb of Dante is empty; the bones are no longer there. This was told me by your Archbishop, Mgr. Codronchi. But I pray you not to breathe a word of it, for it must remain a secret."

At last, when preparations were being made throughout Italy for the celebration of the sixth centenary of Dante's birth, in 1865, the Florentines once more petitioned for the return of Dante's remains to his native city. For the fifth and last

time the request was refused, the Municipality of Ravenna claiming in their reply "that the deposit of the sacred bones of Dante Alighieri in Ravenna could no longer, in view of the happily changed conditions of Italy, be regarded as a perpetuation of his exile, inasmuch as all the cities of Italy were now united together by a lasting bond under one and the same government."

Whether the Municipality, when they returned this answer, were aware that "the sacred bones" of Dante no longer reposed in the tomb which was supposed to contain them, does not appear. At any rate the secret of the empty tomb could not much longer be kept from the world at large, for the opening of the tomb and the identification of the poet's remains was part of the programme of the Sexcentenary Celebration. Preparations for this ceremony were already in progress when the startling announcement was made that a wooden coffin containing the actual bones of Dante had been accidentally discovered bricked up in a cavity in a neighbouring wall.

The story of this remarkable discovery is as follows. In the course of some operations in the Braccioforte Chapel, adjoining the tomb, in connection with the coming celebration, it became necessary to introduce a pump for the purpose of drawing off an accumulation of water. In order to give room for the pump-handle to work, it was

decided to make a cavity in an old wall at the spot where the pump was to be fixed. While the mason was at work with his pick removing the stones, he suddenly struck upon something wooden, which gave back a hollow sound. Curious to find out what this might be, he carefully removed the remaining stones, and to his great surprise came upon a wooden chest or coffin. On lifting the chest one of the planks fell out and revealed a human skeleton, which on a closer inspection proved to be that of Dante, the identity of the remains being established beyond doubt by the discovery of two inscriptions on the chest. One of these, written in ink on the bottom plank, was: *Dantis ossa denuper revisa die 3 Junii* 1677.[1] The other, written on the lid of the chest, ran: *Dantis ossa a me Fre Antonio Santi hic posita Ano* 1677 *die* 18 *Octobris.*[2]

The precious relics were at once carefully removed and deposited in the adjoining mausoleum. The news of the discovery meanwhile spread rapidly through the city. The authorities, accompanied by notaries, arrived in haste, and in their presence an official account was drawn up, recording the facts of the discovery, and the result of a professional examination of the skeleton, which, with

[1] "Dante's bones revisited anew on June 3, 1677."

[2] "Dante's bones, placed here by me, Friar Antonio Santi, on October 18, 1677."

CHEST IN WHICH DANTE'S REMAINS WERE FOUND AT RAVENNA IN 1865

the exception of a few missing bones, was found to be intact.

The excitement amongst the populace was intense, and the crowd could with difficulty be prevented from breaking in. After this discovery the next step, in order to remove all possible doubt, was to open the sarcophagus in which Dante's remains had originally been deposited by Guido da Polenta in 1321, and in which they were supposed by all, except the few who had been in the secret, to have been left undisturbed ever since. It was an anxious moment for the authorities, who would have been terribly embarrassed if a second skeleton had been discovered—Dante could not have had two skeletons! An account of the proceedings, furnished by an eye-witness, was given by Dr. Moore in the *English Historical Review* in October 1888.

"The writer," he says, "met, a few years ago, one who was present on this most interesting occasion, and who had carried away, and still preserved as a relic, a small portion of the precious dust which was found at the bottom of the tomb. This examination took place on June 7, 1865, and the tomb was then *found to be empty*, with the exception of a little earthy or dusty substance, and a few bones corresponding with most of those missing in the chest recently discovered, and these were certified by the surgeon present to belong

undoubtedly to the same skeleton. There were found in it, also, a few withered laurel leaves, which possess a special interest in reference to the description of Dante's burial.[1] . . . It contained, further, some broken fragments of Greek marble, of the same material as the sarcophagus itself. These were soon found to proceed from a rude hole which had been knocked through the sarcophagus at the back, precisely at the part accessible only from the inside of the monastery, through which, beyond all doubt, the removal of the bones had been effected. This hole had been stopped up with bricks and cement, and then plastered over outside so as to leave no mark."

The reason for the violation of Dante's tomb and for the secret removal of his remains by the Franciscans of the adjoining monastery was, it can hardly be doubted, the alarm created by the news that permission had been granted for the transference of the remains to Florence by Pope Leo x. in 1515. The precious relics must have been secreted in the monastery for a hundred and fifty years and more before they were deposited in the cavity where they were found in 1865.

[1] It is evident from this account that the contents of the sarcophagus had not been disturbed since it was opened, three hundred and fifty years before, by the envoys of the Medicean Academy, who found that Dante's remains had been removed. See above, p. 139.

Having thus been satisfactorily verified, Dante's skeleton was put together and laid on white velvet under a glass case, which was exhibited during the three days of June 24, 25, and 26, in the Braccioforte Chapel. Here the remains were reverently visited by thousands of visitors from every part of Italy. "The old and the infirm were supported through the crowd, and children, too young to be conscious of what they saw, were taken up to the crystal coffin, in order that in after years they might say that they also had gazed on Dante."[1]

On June 26 the bones were enclosed in a double coffin of walnut and lead, and then solemnly consigned once more to the original sarcophagus, in which they had first been laid at the time of the poet's death, and there "by the upbraiding shore" they now rest, safe in the custody of the faithful citizens of Ravenna, who have been true to their charge for nearly six hundred years.[2]

[1] *Dante at Ravenna*, by C. M. Phillimore, whose work is more or less of a compilation from *L'ultimo rifugio di Dante*, by C. Ricci. From the latter is derived for the most part the information given above as to the fate of Dante's remains.

[2] A cast of the skeleton as it lay in state, and the wooden coffin in which the remains were placed in 1677, and in which they were discovered in 1865, are preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale at Ravenna.

PART IV

CHARACTERISTICS OF DANTE

CHAPTER I

Boccaccio's account of Dante's person and character—His love of fame—His failings—Account of him by his contemporary, Giovanni Villani.

IN his *Life of Dante* Boccaccio gives the following description of Dante's person and character, which was derived no doubt in part from the recollections of those who had been personally acquainted with the poet at Ravenna. Boccaccio paid several visits to Ravenna, the first of which took place in 1346, just five-and-twenty years after Dante's death, when there can have been little difficulty in collecting information from contemporaries of Dante who had frequented his society, chief among whom was

Piero di Giardino, who, as we have already seen, conversed with Dante on his deathbed.[1]

"Our poet," says Boccaccio, "was of middle height, and after he had reached mature years he walked with somewhat of a stoop; his gait was grave and sedate; and he was ever clothed in most seemly garments, his dress being suited to the ripeness of his years. His face was long, his nose aquiline, his eyes rather large than small, his jaws heavy, with the under lip projecting beyond the upper. His complexion was dark, and his hair and beard thick, black, and crisp; and his countenance always sad and thoughtful. Whence it happened one day in Verona (the fame of his writings having by that time been spread abroad everywhere, and especially of that part of his *Commedia* to which he gave the title of Hell, and he himself being known by sight to many men and women), that as he passed before a doorway where several women were sitting, one of them said to the others in a low voice, but not so low but that she was plainly heard by him and by those with him, 'Do you see the man who goes down to Hell, and returns at his pleasure, and brings back news of those who are below?' To which one of the others answered in all simplicity: 'Indeed, what you say must be true; don't you see how his beard is

[1] See above, p. 129 *note*.

crisped and his colour darkened by the heat and smoke down below?' Dante, hearing these words behind him, and perceiving that they were spoken by the women in perfect good faith, was not ill pleased that they should have such an opinion of him, and smiling a little passed on his way.

"In his manners, whether in public or in private, he was wonderfully composed and restrained, and in all his ways he was more courteous and civil than any one else. In food and drink he was very moderate, both in partaking of them at the regular hours, and in never indulging to excess; nor did he ever particularly care for one thing more than for another. He commended delicate dishes, but for the most part lived on plain fare; condemning in no measured terms those who study much to have choice dainties, and to have them prepared with all possible care,—declaring that such people do not eat in order to live, but live in order to eat.

"No man was more wakeful than he, whether in his studies or in anything which gave him anxious thought, to such an extent that many a time his household and his wife used to be vexed at it, until, growing accustomed to his ways, they came to take no notice of it. He rarely spoke, save when spoken to, and that with deliberation and in tones suited to the subject of his discourse.

Nevertheless, when occasion demanded, he was most eloquent and fluent, with an excellent and ready delivery.

"In his youth he took the greatest pleasure in music and singing, and was on friendly and familiar terms with all the best singers and musicians of the time. And his love for music led him to compose many things, which he had set by them to pleasing and masterly accompaniments. How ardently he was devoted to love has already been shown; and it is firmly believed by all that it was this love which moved his genius to composition in the vulgar tongue, at first in the way of imitation; afterwards through his desire to express his emotions in more permanent shape, and for the sake of renown, he assiduously practised himself therein, and not only surpassed all his contemporaries, but also so illustrated and beautified the language that he made many then, and will make many others hereafter, eager to become skilled in their own tongue.

"He delighted also in solitude, holding himself aloof from other people, in order that his meditations might not be interrupted; and if while he was in company any thought occurred to him which pleased him well, however much he might be questioned about any other matter, he would make no reply to his questioner until he had

either made sure of his idea or had rejected it,—a thing which happened to him many a time when questions were put to him at table, or by his companions on a journey, or elsewhere.

"In his studies he was most diligent, and while he was occupied with them no news that he might chance to hear could take him away from them. And it is related by certain credible witnesses, with regard to his giving himself up wholly to what pleased him, that on one of the occasions when he was in Siena, he chanced to be at an apothecary's shop, where a book was brought to him which had been previously promised him, this book being one of much reputation among persons of worth, and having never yet been seen by him. As he happened to be unable to take it elsewhere, he leant over on to the bench in front of the apothecary's shop, and there, placing the book before him, began most eagerly to examine it. Soon afterwards, in that same quarter, close to where he was, on the occasion of some general festival a great tournament took place among the noble youths of Siena, accompanied, as is usually the case on such occasions, with a great deal of noise caused by the various instruments and shouts of applause from the bystanders; yet, in spite of all this, and of many other things likely to attract the attention, such as fair ladies dancing, and youths' sports of all kinds, he was never seen

to stir from his place, nor so much as to raise his eyes from his book. Indeed, although it was about noon when he took his stand there, it was not till past the hour of vespers when, having examined the book thoroughly and taken a general survey of its contents, he got up to leave it. He afterwards declared to several persons, who asked him how he could refrain from looking on at such a splendid festival as had taken place in his presence, that he had been wholly unaware of it —an answer which made his questioners wonder even more than they had done at first.

"Dante, moreover, was of marvellous capacity, with a most retentive memory, and keen intellect, insomuch that when he was in Paris, and in a disputation held in the theological schools, fourteen questions had been propounded by divers scholars on divers subjects, he without hesitation took them up and went over them in the order in which they had been given, together with the arguments for and against, adduced by the opponents; and then, preserving the same order, he subtly replied to and refuted the arguments on the other side — which thing was regarded as little short of a miracle by those who were present.

"He was likewise of the most lofty genius and of subtle invention, as is made manifest by his works, to such as understand, far more clearly

than my writing could express. He was very greedy of honour and glory, more so perhaps than beseemed his fame and virtue. Yet, what life is so humble as not to be touched by the sweetness of glory? And it was by reason of this desire, I think, that he loved poetry more than any other pursuit, perceiving that although philosophy surpasses all things else in nobility, yet her excellence can be communicated only to the few, and those who win fame thereby in the world are many; whereas poetry is less abstruse and more pleasing to every one, and poets are exceeding few. Therefore, hoping by her means to attain to the unusual and glorious honour of the laurel crown, he devoted himself wholly to the study and composition of poetry. And of a surety his desire would have been fulfilled had Fortune favoured him so far as to allow him ever to return to Florence, where alone, at the font of San Giovanni, he was willing to receive the crown; to the end that in the same place where he had received his first name in baptism, there too he might receive the second by being crowned. But it so came about that although his sufficiency was great, and such that wherever he had chosen he might have received the laurel, yet, in expectation of that return which was destined never to take place, he would not consent to accept it anywhere else

than in Florence; and so he died without the much coveted honour.

"Our poet, further, was of a very lofty and scornful disposition, insomuch that when a certain friend of his, in answer to his entreaties to that effect, sought to bring about his return to Florence, which he most ardently longed for above all things else, and could find no other way with those who then had the government of the Republic in their hands, save this one only: that he should be kept in prison for a certain space, and afterwards on some solemn public occasion should be presented, as an act of mercy, in our principal church, being thereby restored to liberty and released from every sentence previously passed upon him—such a thing, in his opinion, being fitting to be practised only in the case of abject and infamous men and of no others, he, notwithstanding his great longing, chose rather to remain in exile than by such means to return to his home.

"Likewise Dante thought no little of himself, rating his own worth no less highly, according to the reports of his contemporaries, than was his actual due. Which thing was apparent on one occasion among others to a remarkable degree at the time when he and his party were at the head of affairs in the Republic; for, inasmuch as those who were out of power had, through

the mediation of Pope Boniface VIII., invited a brother or relation of Philip, the then King of France, whose name was Charles, to come and set to rights the affairs of our city, all the chiefs of the party with which Dante was allied, met together in council to make provision concerning this matter; and there among other things they resolved to send an embassy to the Pope, who was then at Rome, in order to induce the Pope to oppose the coming of the said Charles, or to arrange for him to come in agreement with the said party which was in power. And when it came to be debated who should be at the head of the proposed embassy, it was agreed by all that it should be Dante. To which request Dante, after a brief hesitation, said: 'If I go, who remains? If I remain, who goes?' As though he alone of them all was of any consequence, or gave any consequence to the rest. This saying was understood and taken note of.

"But, apart from all this, this worthy man in all his adversities showed the greatest fortitude. Only in one thing he was I know not whether I should say impatient or passionate, namely, he was more given to faction after his exile than was becoming to a man of his parts, and more than he would have had it believed of him by others. And what I most blush for on account of his memory is that in Romagna it is perfectly

notorious to every one that any feeble woman or little child who had spoken on party matters, and found fault with the Ghibelline party to which he belonged, would have stirred him to such a pitch of madness that he would have thrown stones at them if they had not held their peace; and this passion he retained to the day of his death. And assuredly I blush to be obliged to blot the fame of so great a man with any defect; but the manner in which I ordered my matter at the outset in some sort demands it, for if I were to be silent regarding things not to his credit, I should shake the faith of my readers in the things already related which are to his credit. Therefore to him himself I make my excuse, who maybe from some lofty region of heaven looks down with scornful eye upon me as I write.

"Amid all the virtue and all the learning which has been shown above to have been possessed by this wondrous poet, the vice of lustfulness found no small place, and that not only in the years of his youth, but also in the years of his maturity;[1] the which vice, though it be natural and common, yet cannot be worthily excused. Nevertheless, bearing in mind what is written of David, and Solomon, and of many others, our poet may be allowed to pass by, not excused,

[1] There are several passages in the *Divina Commedia* which seem to hint at Dante's consciousness of this failing (see above, p. 97).

but accused with less severity than if he had been alone in this failing."

With this account of Dante by Boccaccio it is interesting to compare the brief description of his personal characteristics furnished by his contemporary and neighbour in Florence, the chronicler Giovanni Villani.

"This Dante," he says, "was an honourable and ancient citizen of Florence, belonging to the Porta San Piero, and our neighbour. . . . This man was a great scholar in almost every branch of learning, although he was a layman: he was a great poet and philosopher, and a perfect rhetorician both in prose and verse, and in public debate he was a very noble speaker; in rime he was supreme, with the most polished and beautiful style that ever had been in our language, up to his time and since. . . . This Dante, on account of his great learning, was somewhat haughty and reserved and scornful, and after the manner of a philosopher little gracious, not adapting himself to the conversation of the unlearned. But on account of his other virtues and knowledge and worth, it seems right to perpetuate the memory of so great a citizen in this our chronicle, albeit that his noble works left to us in writing are the true testimony to his fame and a lasting honour to our city."[1]

[1] Bk. ix. ch. 136.

CHAPTER II

Portraits of Dante—The Giotto portrait in the Bargello—Norton's account of the Bargello portrait — Its disappearance and rediscovery — The death-mask — Its relation to the portrait — The Naples bronze — The Riccardi portrait — The picture by Domenico di Michelino

FROM the written descriptions of Dante the transition is natural to the subject of the actual representation of the poet's face, depicted during his lifetime.

Of portraits from the life, so far as is known, there is one only, that most beautiful of all the portraits of Dante, painted by Giotto, the great Florentine artist, whose fame is inseparably connected with that of the great Florentine poet. An interesting account of this portrait, of its disappearance and rediscovery, together with a comparison of it with the mask supposed to have been modelled from Dante's face after death, is given by Professor Charles Eliot Norton, in his work *On the Original Portraits of Dante*, which was published in 1865 in honour of the six-hundredth

PORTRAIT OF DANTE BY GIOTTO IN THE BARGELLO AT FLORENCE

From a drawing by Seymour Kirkup

anniversary of the poet's birth. After quoting Boccaccio's description of Dante's physiognomy, which has already been given above, Professor Norton writes :—

"Such was Dante as he appeared in his later years to those from whose recollections of him Boccaccio drew this description. But Boccaccio, had he chosen so to do, might have drawn another portrait of Dante, not the author of the *Divine Comedy*, but the author of the *New Life*. The likeness of the youthful Dante was familiar to those Florentines who had never looked on the presence of their greatest citizen.

"On the altar-wall of the chapel of the Palace of the Podestà (now the Bargello) Giotto painted a grand religious composition, in which, after the fashion of the times, he exalted the glory of Florence by the introduction of some of her most famous citizens into the assembly of the blessed in Paradise. 'The head of Christ, full of dignity, appears above, and lower down, the escutcheon of Florence, supported by angels, with two rows of saints, male and female, attendant to the right and left, in front of whom stand a company of the magnates of the city, headed by two crowned personages, close to one of whom, to the right, stands Dante, a pomegranate in his hand, and wearing the graceful falling cap of the day.'[1]

[1] Lord Lindsay's *History of Christian Art*, vol. ii. p. 174.

The date when this picture was painted is uncertain, but Giotto represented his friend in it as a youth, such as he may have been in the first flush of early fame, at the season of the beginning of their memorable friendship.

"Of all the portraits of the revival of Art, there is none comparable in interest to this likeness of the supreme poet by the supreme artist of mediæval Europe. It was due to no accident of fortune that these men were contemporaries and of the same country; but it was a fortunate and delightful incident, that they were so brought together by sympathy of genius and by favouring circumstances as to become friends, to love and honour each other in life, and to celebrate each other through all time in their respective works.[1] The story of their friendship is known only in its outline, but that it began when they were young is certain, and that it lasted till death divided them is a tradition which finds ready acceptance.

"It was probably between 1290 and 1300, when Giotto was just rising to unrivalled fame, that this painting was executed.[2] There is no con-

[1] Dante mentions Giotto in the *Commedia*: "Cimabue thought to hold the field in painting, and now Giotto has the cry, so that the fame of the other is obscured" (*Purg.* xi. 94–96).

[2] Lord Lindsay says: "There can be little doubt, from the prominent position assigned Dante in this composi-

temporary record of it, the earliest known reference to it being that by Filippo Villani,[1] who died about 1404. Giannozzo Manetti, who died in 1459, also mentions it;[2] and Vasari, in his *Life of Giotto,* published in 1550, says that Giotto 'became so good an imitator of nature, that he altogether discarded the stiff Greek manner, and revived the modern and good art of painting, introducing exact drawing from nature of living persons, which for more than two hundred years had not been practised, or if indeed any one had tried it, he had not succeeded very happily, nor anything like so well as Giotto. And he portrayed among other persons, as may even now be seen, in the chapel of the Palace of the Podestà in Florence, Dante Alighieri, his contemporary and greatest friend, who was not less famous a poet than Giotto was painter in those days. . . . In the same chapel is the portrait by the same hand of Ser Brunetto Latini, the master of Dante, and of Messer Corso Donati, a great citizen of those times.'

tion, as well as from his personal appearance, that this fresco was painted in, or immediately after, the year 1300, when he was one of the Priors of the Republic, and in the thirty-fifth year of his age."

[1] In the notice of Giotto in his *Liber de Civitatis Florentiae Famosis Civibus.*

[2] In his *Vita Dantis.*

"One might have supposed that such a picture as this would have been among the most carefully protected and jealously prized treasures of Florence. But such was not the case. The shameful neglect of many of the best and most interesting works of the earlier period of Art, which accompanied and was one of the symptoms of the moral and political decline of Italy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, extended to this as to other of the noblest paintings of Giotto. Florence, in losing consciousness of present worth, lost care for the memorials of her past honour, dignity, and distinction. The Palace of the Podestà, no longer needed for the dwelling of the chief magistrate of a free city, was turned into a jail for common criminals, and what had once been its beautiful and sacred chapel was occupied as a larder or storeroom.[1] The walls, adorned with paintings more precious than gold, were covered with whitewash, and the fresco of Giotto was swept over by the brush of the plasterer. It was not only thus hidden from the

[1] F. J. Bunbury, writing in 1852, says: "The Bargello of Florence, which at present contains the prisons, and some public offices of the Government, was once the Palace of the Podestà, . . . but for centuries the chamber [in which was the portrait of Dante] had been coated with whitewash, divided into two storeys, and partitioned for prisoners' cells." The whole Bargello building is now used as a museum.

sight of those unworthy indeed to behold it, but it almost disappeared from memory also; and from the time of Vasari down to that of Moreni, a Florentine antiquary, in the early part of the present century, hardly a mention of it occurs. In a note found among his papers, Moreni laments that he had spent two years of his life in unavailing efforts to recover the portrait of Dante, and the other portions of the fresco of Giotto in the Bargello, mentioned by Vasari; that others before him had made a like effort, and had failed in like manner; and that he hoped that better times would come, in which this painting, of such historic and artistic interest, would again be sought for, and at length recovered. Stimulated by these words, three gentlemen, one an American, Mr. Richard Henry Wilde, one an Englishman, Mr. Seymour Kirkup, and one an Italian, Signor G. Aubrey Bezzi, all scholars devoted to the study of Dante, undertook new researches, in 1840, and, after many hindrances on the part of the Government,[1] which were at length successfully overcome, the work of removing the crust of plaster from the walls of the ancient chapel was entrusted to the Florentine painter, Marini. This new and well-directed search did not fail. After some months' labour the fresco was found,[2] almost uninjured, under the whitewash that had protected while

[1] Of the Grand Duke. [2] July 21, 1840

concealing it, and at length the likeness of Dante was uncovered.[1]

"'But,' says Mr. Kirkup, in a letter published in the *Spectator* (London), May 11, 1850, 'the eye of the beautiful profile was wanting. There was a hole an inch deep, or an inch and a half. Marini said it was a nail. It did seem precisely the damage of a nail drawn out. Afterwards . . . Marini filled the hole and made a new eye, too little and ill designed, and then he retouched the whole face and clothes, to the great damage of the expression and character. The likeness of the face, and the three colours in which Dante was dressed, the same with those of Beatrice, those of young Italy, white, green, and red, stand no more; the green is turned to chocolate colour; moreover, the form of the cap is lost and confounded.

"'I desired to make a drawing. . . . It was denied to me. . . . But I obtained the means to be shut up in the prison for a morning; and not only did I make a drawing, but a tracing also, and with

[1] "The enthusiasm of the Florentines," says Lord Lindsay, "on the announcement of the discovery, resembled that of their ancestors when Borgo Allegri received its name from their rejoicings in sympathy with Cimabue. 'L' abbiamo il nostro poeta!' was the universal cry, and for days afterwards the Bargello was thronged with a continuous succession of pilgrim visitors."

the two I then made a facsimile sufficiently careful. Luckily it was before the *rifacimento*.'

"This facsimile afterwards passed into the hands of Lord Vernon, well known for his interest in all Dantesque studies, and by his permission it has been admirably reproduced in chromo-lithography under the auspices of the Arundel Society.[1] The reproduction is entirely satisfactory as a presentation of the authentic portrait of the youthful Dante, in the state in which it was when Mr. Kirkup was so fortunate as to gain admission to it.

"This portrait by Giotto is the only likeness of Dante known to have been made of the poet during his life, and is of inestimable value on this account. But there exists also a mask, concerning which there is a tradition that it was taken from the face of the dead poet, and which, if its genuineness could be established, would not be of inferior interest to the early portrait. But there is no trustworthy historic testimony concerning it, and its authority as a likeness depends upon the evidence of truth which its own character affords. On the very threshold of the inquiry concerning it, we are met with the doubt whether the art of taking casts was practised at the time of Dante's

[1] The tracing which Kirkup made at the same time as the drawing was given by him to his friend Gabriel Rossetti, who handed it on to his son, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It was sold after the death of the latter in 1882.

death. In his *Life of Andrea del Verrocchio* Vasari says that this art began to come into use in his time, that is, about the middle of the fifteenth century; and Bottari refers to the likeness of Brunelleschi, who died in 1446, which was taken in this manner, and was preserved in the Office of the Works of the Cathedral at Florence. It is not impossible that so simple an art may have been sometimes practised at an earlier period;[1] and if so, there is no inherent improbability in the supposition that Guido Novello, the friend and protector of Dante at Ravenna, may, at the time of the poet's death, have had a mask taken to serve as a model for the head of a statue intended to form part of the monument which he proposed to erect in honour of Dante. And it may further be supposed, that, this design failing, owing to the fall of Guido from power before its accomplishment, the mask may have been preserved at Ravenna, till we first catch a trace of it nearly three centuries later.

"There is in the Magliabecchiana Library at Florence an autograph manuscript by Giovanni Cinelli, a Florentine antiquary who died in 1706, entitled *La Toscana letterata, ovvero Istoria degli Scrittori Fiorentini,* which contains a life of Dante.

[1] As a matter of fact the art of taking casts from the dead face was known in the days of Pliny, by whom reference is made to it.

In the course of the biography Cinelli states that the Archbishop of Ravenna caused the head of the poet which had adorned his sepulchre to be taken therefrom, and that it came into the possession of the famous sculptor, Gian Bologna, who left it at his death, in 1606, to his pupil Pietro Tacca. 'One day Tacca showed it, with other curiosities, to the Duchess Sforza, who, having wrapped it in a scarf of green cloth, carried it away, and God knows into whose hands the precious object has fallen, or where it is to be found. . . . On account of its singular beauty, it had often been drawn by the scholars of Tacca.' It has been supposed that this head was the original mask from which the casts now existing are derived. Mr. Seymour Kirkup, in a note on this passage from Cinelli, says that 'there are three masks of Dante at Florence, all of which have been judged by the first Roman and Florentine sculptors to have been taken from life [that is, from the face after death]—the slight differences noticeable between them being such as might occur in casts made from the original mask.' One of these casts was given to Mr. Kirkup by the sculptor Bartolini, another belonged to the late sculptor, Professor Ricci,[1] and the

[1] The mask possessed by Ricci, who made use of it for the purposes of his statue of Dante in Santa Croce in Florence, eventually also passed into the hands of Kirkup.

third is in the possession of the Marchese Torrigiani.[1]

"In the absence of historical evidence in regard to this mask, some support is given to the belief in its genuineness by the fact that it appears to be the type of the greater number of the portraits of Dante executed from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, and was adopted by Raffaelle as the original from which he drew the likeness which has done most to make the features of the poet familiar to the world.

"The character of the mask itself affords, however, the only really satisfactory ground for confidence in the truth of the tradition concerning it. It was plainly taken as a cast from a face after death.[2] It has none of the characteristics which a fictitious and imaginative representation of the sort would be likely to present. It bears no trace of being a work of skilful and deceptive art.[3] The difference between the sides of the face, the slight deflection in the line of the nose,[4] the droop

[1] This last is now in the Gallery of the Uffizi at Florence.

[2] This was the opinion also of the eminent surgeon, the late Sir James Paget.

[3] Corrado Ricci, on the other hand, who persistently denies the genuineness of the death-mask, does not hesitate to declare that the trace of the sculptor's tool is everywhere evident!

[4] Sir James Paget pointed out that this depression of the tip of the nose, which one is accustomed to regard as

MASK OF DANTE IN THE UFFIZI AT FLORENCE

Formerly in possession of the Marchese Torrigiani

of the corners of the mouth, and other delicate, but none the less convincing indications, combine to show that it was in all probability taken from nature. The countenance, moreover, and expression, are worthy of Dante; no ideal forms could so answer to the face of him who had led a life apart from the world in which he dwelt, and had been conducted by love and faith along hard, painful, and solitary ways, to behold

'L'alto trionfo del regno verace.'[1]

"The mask conforms entirely to the description by Boccaccio of the poet's countenance, save that it is beardless, and this difference is to be accounted for by the fact that to obtain the cast the beard must have been removed.[2]

"The face is one of the most pathetic upon which human eyes ever looked, for it exhibits in its expression the conflict between the strong nature of the man and the hard dealings of fortune,—between the idea of his life and its practical experience. Strength is the most striking attribute of the countenance, displayed

characteristic of Dante's face, was just such as would have been produced by the weight of the plaster in taking the cast.

[1] "The high triumph of the true kingdom" (*Par.* xxx. 98).

[2] That Dante had a beard we know from himself (*Purg* xxxi. 68).

alike in the broad forehead, the masculine nose, the firm lips, the heavy jaw and wide chin; and this strength, resulting from the main forms of the features, is enforced by the strength of the lines of expression. The look is grave and stern almost to grimness; there is a scornful lift to the eyebrow, and a contraction of the forehead as from painful thought; but obscured under this look, yet not lost, are the marks of tenderness, refinement, and self-mastery, which, in combination with more obvious characteristics, give to the countenance of the dead poet an ineffable dignity and melancholy. There is neither weakness nor failure here. It is the image of the strong fortress of a strong soul 'buttressed on conscience and impregnable will,' battered by the blows of enemies without and within, bearing upon its walls the dints of many a siege, but standing firm and unshaken against all attacks until the warfare was at an end.

"The intrinsic evidence for the truth of this likeness, from its correspondence, not only with the description of the poet, but with the imagination that we form of him from his life and works, is strongly confirmed by a comparison of the mask with the portrait by Giotto. So far as I am aware, this comparison has not hitherto been made in a manner to exhibit effectively the resemblance between the two. A direct com-

parison between the painting and the mask, owing to the difficulty of reducing the forms of the latter to a plain surface of light and shade, is unsatisfactory. But by taking a photograph from the mask,[1] in the same position as that in which the face is painted by Giotto, and placing it alongside of the facsimile from the painting,[2] a very remarkable similarity becomes at once apparent. In the two accompanying photographs the striking resemblance between them is not to be mistaken. The differences are only such as must exist between the portrait of a man in the freshness of a happy youth, and the portrait of him in his age, after much experience and many trials. Dante was fifty-six years old at the time of his death, when the mask was taken; the portrait by Giotto represents him as not much past twenty. There is an interval of at least thirty years between the two. And what years they had been for him!

"The interest of this comparison lies not only in the mutual support which the portraits afford each other, in the assurance each gives that the other is genuine, but also in their joint illustration of the life and character of Dante. As Giotto painted him, he is the lover of Beatrice, the gay

[1] A representation of the mask, in two positions, is given on plate opposite p. 115.

[2] See plate, opposite p. 159.

companion of princes,[1] the friend of poets, and himself already the most famous writer of love verses in Italy. There is an almost feminine softness in the lines of the face, with a sweet and serious tenderness well befitting the lover, and the author of the sonnets and canzoni, which were in a few years to be gathered into the incomparable record of his *New Life*. It is the face of Dante in the May-time of youthful hope, in that serene season of promise and of joy, which was so soon to reach its foreordained close in the death of her who had made life new and beautiful for him, and to the love and honour of whom he dedicated his soul and gave all his future years. It is the same face with that of the mask; but the one is the face of a youth, 'with all triumphant splendour on his brow,' the other of a man, burdened with 'the dust and injury of age.' The forms and features are alike, but as to the later face,

> 'That time of year thou mayst in it behold
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.'

The face of the youth is grave, as with the

[1] Compare the reference to Charles Martel of Hungary, *Paradiso*, viii. 55–57.

shadow of distant sorrow; the face of the man is solemn, as of one who had gone

'Per tutti i cerchi del dolente regno.'[1]

The one is the young poet of Florence, the other the supreme poet of the world—

'Che al divino dall' umano,
All' eterno dal tempo era venuto.'"[2]

From the death-mask described above appears to have been modelled the famous bronze bust of Dante, now in the National Museum at Naples.[3]

So-called portraits of Dante in various frescoes and illuminated manuscripts are numerous. The best known of the latter is the one prefixed to Codex 1040 in the Riccardi Library in Florence, which was pronounced by the commission appointed to examine into the question in 1864 to be the most authentic portrait of Dante in existence. This opinion, however, which was disputed at the time, has not by any means met with general acceptance.[4]

[1] "Through all the circles of the woeful kingdom" (*Purgatorio*, vii. 22).

[2] "Who was come from the human to the divine, from time to eternity" (*Paradiso*, xxxi. 37–38).

[3] See frontispiece.

[4] In 1864, in view of the approaching celebration in Florence of the sixth centenary of Dante's birth, the Minister of Public Instruction commissioned Gaetano

A very interesting representation of Dante, with his book (the *Divina Commedia*) in his hand, and in the background a view of Florence on one side, and of the three kingdoms of the other world on the other, is placed over the north door in the Cathedral of Florence. This picture was painted in 1466, about a hundred and fifty years after Dante's death, by Domenico di Michelino, a pupil of Fra Angelico; and though it cannot in any sense claim to be a portrait of Dante it has great value as a characteristic representation of

Milanesi and Luigi Passerini to report upon the most authentic portrait of the poet, as it was proposed to have a medallion executed in commemoration of the centenary. Milanesi and Passerini communicated the results of their investigations to the Minister in a letter which was published in the *Giornale del Centenario* for 20th July 1864. After stating their doubts with regard to the Bargello portrait, and disposing of the claims of two other portraits contained in MSS. preserved in Florence, they go on to say: "Very precious on the other hand is the portrait prefixed to Codex 1040 in the Riccardi Library, which contains the minor poems of Dante, together with those of Messer Bindi Bonichi, and which appears from the arms and initials to have belonged to Paolo di Jacopo Giannotti, who was born in 1430. This portrait, which is about half the size of life, is in water-colour, and represents the poet with his characteristic features at the age of rather more than forty. It is free from the exaggeration of later artists, who, by giving undue prominence to the nose and under-lip and chin, make Dante's profile resemble that of a hideous

the poet, in the Florentine costume of the day, and crowned with the poet's crown of laurel.[1]

old woman. In our opinion this portrait is to be preferred to any other, especially for the purposes of a medallion."

Cavalcaselle, among other authorities, declined to accept these conclusions. Checcacci, on the contrary, who carefully compared the Riccardi portrait with a very exact copy of that in the Bargello, asserted that if the difference of age be taken into consideration, the two resemble each other "like two drops of water":—"The Bargello portrait lacks the wrinkles of the other, while the colouring is more fresh, and the prominence of the lower lip is less marked, but the nose, which does not change with advancing years, is identical, as are the shape and colour of the eyes, and the shape of the skull, which may be distinguished in both portraits." He added further that the sculptor Dupré was greatly struck with the Riccardi portrait, which he considered might be the work of Giotto himself, and that he availed himself of it for the medallion which he was commissioned to execute in commemoration of the centenary.

[1] See plate, opposite p. 193.

CHAPTER III

Anecdotes of Dante—Dante and Can Grande della Scala—Belacqua and Dante—Sacchetti's stories—Dante and the blacksmith—Dante and the donkey-driver—Dante's creed—Dante and King Robert of Naples—Dante's reply to the bore—Dante and the Doge of Venice.

MANY anecdotes and traditions concerning Dante have been preserved by various Italian writers, the majority of which are undoubtedly apocryphal. Some of them, however, are worth recording, as representing the popular conception of what Dante was like in ordinary life.

One of the earliest is that told by Petrarch[1] of Dante at the court of Can Grande della Scala at Verona, after he had been exiled from Florence :—

"Dante Alighieri, erewhile my fellow-citizen, was a man greatly accomplished in the vulgar tongue; but on account of his pride he was somewhat more free in his manners and speech than was acceptable to the sensitive eyes and ears of the noble princes of our country. Thus,

[1] In bk. ii. of the *Res Memorandae.*

when he was exiled from his native city, and was a guest at the court of Can Grande, at that time the refuge and resort of all who were in misfortune, he was at first held in high honour; but afterwards by degrees he began to lose favour, and day by day became less pleasing to his host. Among the guests at the same time were, according to the custom of those days, mimics and buffoons of every description, one of whom, an impudent rascal, by means of his coarse remarks and broad jests made himself a universal favourite and a person of considerable influence. Can Grande, suspecting that this was a cause of vexation to Dante, sent for the buffoon, and after lavishing praise upon him, turned to Dante and said: 'I wonder how it is that this man, fool though he be, understands how to please us all, and is petted by every one; while you, for all your reputed wisdom, can do nothing of the kind!' Dante replied: 'You would hardly wonder at that, if you remembered that like manners and like minds are the real causes of friendship.'" [1]

A similar anecdote is told by Michele Savonarola, the grandfather of the famous Florentine preacher and reformer, Girolamo Savonarola:—"I will tell you the answer made by Dante to a buffoon at the court of the Lord della Scala of Verona, who, having received from his master

[1] Or, as we should say, "birds of a feather flock together."

a fine coat as a reward for some piece of buffoonery, showed it to Dante, and said: 'You with all your letters, and sonnets, and books, have never received a present like this.' To which Dante answered: 'What you say is true; and this has fallen to you and not to me, because you have found your likes, and I have not yet found mine. There, you understand that!'" [1]

Another story of Dante and Can Grande turns on his host's name, Cane ("dog"):—"Once when Dante was at his table Cane della Scala, who was a very gracious lord, wishing to have a joke with the poet and to incite him to some smart saying, ordered his servants to collect all the bones from the repast and to put them privily at Dante's feet. When the tables were removed, and the company saw the pile of bones at Dante's feet, they all began to laugh, and asked him if he were a bone-merchant. Whereupon Dante quickly replied: 'It is no wonder if the dogs have eaten all their bones; but I am not a dog, and so I could not eat mine.' And he said this because his host was called Cane ('dog')."

The author of an old commentary on the *Divina Commedia*, written probably not many years after Dante's death, relates Dante's retort to the musical-instrument maker of Florence,

[1] Quoted by Papanti in *Dante secondo la tradizione e i novellatori*, p. 94.

whom the poet has placed among the negligent in his Ante-Purgatory:[1]—"Belacqua was a citizen of Florence, who made the necks of lutes and guitars, and he was the laziest man that ever was known. It was said that he used to come in the morning to his shop and sit himself down, and never stir again except to go to dinner or to his siesta. Now Dante was a familiar acquaintance of his, and often rebuked him for his laziness; whereupon one day when he was scolding him, Belacqua answered him with the words of Aristotle: 'By repose and quiet the mind attains to wisdom.' To which Dante retorted: 'Certainly if repose will make a man wise, you ought to be the wisest man on earth.'"[2]

Benvenuto da Imola, another commentator on the *Commedia,* says that besides being a maker of musical instruments, this Belacqua was also something of a musician, and he explains that it was on this account that Dante, who was a lover of music, became intimate with him.

The following two stories of Dante in Florence are told by Franco Sacchetti, the Florentine writer of tales, who was born within twenty years of Dante's death, and belonged to a family which had a long-standing blood-feud with Dante's family, Geri del Bello, the first cousin of the poet's father, having been killed by one

[1] *Purgatorio,* iv. 106–127. [2] *Anonimo Fiorentino.*

of the Sacchetti.[1] The first story contains also a characteristic anecdote of Dante's uncompromising ways, which according to Sacchetti largely contributed to bring about his exile.

"That most excellent poet in the vulgar tongue, whose fame will never die, Dante Alighieri of Florence, lived in Florence not far from the Adimari family, one of whom, a young man, got into trouble through some misdoing or other, and was like to be sentenced to punishment by one of the magistrates. As the magistrate was a friend of Dante's, the young man begged the latter to intercede in his favour, which Dante readily consented to do. After dinner, Dante went out from his house, and started on his way to fulfil his promise. As he passed by the Porta San Piero, a blacksmith was hammering iron on his anvil, and at the same time bawling out some of Dante's verses, leaving out lines here and there, and putting in others of his own, which seemed to Dante a most monstrous outrage. Without saying a word he went up to the blacksmith's forge, where were kept all the tools he used to ply his trade, and seizing the hammer flung it into the street; then he took the tongs and flung them after the hammer, and the scales after the tongs; and he did the same with a number of the other tools.

[1] See above, pp. 65–66.

The blacksmith, turning round to him with a coarse gesture, said: 'What the devil are you doing? are you mad?' Dante replied: 'What are you doing?' 'I am about my business,' said the smith, 'and you are spoiling my tools by throwing them into the street.' Dante retorted: 'If you do not want me to spoil your things, do not you spoil mine.' The smith replied: 'And what of yours am I spoiling?' Dante said: 'You sing out of my book, and do not give the words as I wrote them. That is my business, and you are spoiling it for me.' The blacksmith, bursting with rage, but not knowing what to answer, picked up his things and went back to his work. And the next time he wanted to sing, he sang of Tristram and Lancelot, and let Dante's book alone.

"Dante meanwhile pursued his way to the magistrate; and when he was come to his house, and bethought himself that this Adimari was a haughty young man, and behaved with scant courtesy when he went about in the city, especially when he was on horseback (for he used to ride with his legs so wide apart that if the street happened to be narrow he took up the whole of it, forcing every passer-by to brush against the points of his boots—a manner of behaviour which greatly displeased Dante, who was very observant), Dante said to the magistrate:

'You have before your court such a young man for such an offence; I recommend him to your favour, though his behaviour is such that he deserves to be the more severely punished, for to my mind usurping the property of the commonwealth is a very serious crime.' Dante did not speak to deaf ears. The magistrate asked what property of the commonwealth the young man had usurped. Dante answered: 'When he rides through the city he sits on his horse with his legs so wide apart that whoever meets him is obliged to turn back, and is prevented from going on his way.' The magistrate said: 'Do you regard this as a joke? it is a more serious offence than the other!' Dante replied: 'Well, you see, I am his neighbour, and recommend him to you.' And he returned to his house, where the young man asked him how the matter stood. Dante said: 'He gave me a favourable answer.' A few days afterwards the young man was summoned before the court to answer the charge against him. After the first charge had been read, the judge had the second read also, as to his riding with his legs wide-spread. The young man, perceiving that his penalty would be doubled, said to himself: 'I have made a fine bargain! instead of being let off through the intervention of Dante, I shall now be sentenced on two

counts.' So returning home he went to Dante and said: 'Upon my word, you have served me well! Before you went to the magistrate he had a mind to sentence me on one count; since you went he is like to sentence me on two,'—and in a great fury he turned to Dante and said: 'If I am sentenced I shall be able to pay, and sooner or later I will pay out the person who got me sentenced.' Dante replied: 'I did my best for you, and could not have done more if you had been my own son. It is not my fault if the magistrate does not do as you wish.' The young man, shaking his head, returned home; and a few days afterwards was fined a thousand lire for the first offence, and another thousand for riding with his legs wide-spread—a thing he never ceased to resent, both he and all the rest of the Adimari. And this was the principal reason why not long after Dante was expelled from Florence as a member of the White party, and eventually died in exile at Ravenna, to the lasting shame of his native city."[1]

This story, Sacchetti informs his readers, reminded him of another one about Dante, which he thought too good to be omitted from his collection. It runs as follows:—

"On another occasion as Dante was walking through the streets of Florence on no particular

[1] *Novella* cxiv.

errand, and, according to the custom of the day, was wearing a gorget and arm-piece, he met a donkey-driver whose donkeys were loaded with refuse. As he walked behind the donkeys the driver sang some of Dante's verses, and after every two or three lines he would beat one of the donkeys, and cry out: *Arri!*[1] Dante going up to him gave him a great thump on the back with his arm-piece, and said: 'That *Arri* was not put in by me.' The driver not knowing who Dante was, nor why he had struck him, only beat his donkeys the more, and again cried out: *Arri!* But when he had got a little way off, he turned round and put out his tongue at Dante, and made an indecent gesture, saying: 'Take that!' Dante, seeing this, said to him: 'I would not give one word of mine for a hundred of yours.' Oh! gentle words, worthy of a philosopher! Most people would have run after the donkey-driver with threats and abuse; or would have thrown stones at him. But the wise poet confounded the donkey-driver, and at the same time won the commendation of every one who had witnessed what took place."[2]

The following story professes to account for the poetical version of the Creed in *terza rima*, which is often included among Dante's works,

[1] Equivalent to our "Gee-up!"

[2] *Novella* CXV.

together with a similar version of the seven penitential Psalms.[1]

"At the time when Dante was writing his book (the *Divina Commedia*) many people who could not understand it said that it was contrary to the Christian faith. And it came about that Dante was exiled from Florence, and forbidden to come within a certain distance of the city, which prohibition being disregarded, he was proclaimed by the Florentines as a rebel. After wandering about for some time in many countries he at last came to Ravenna, an ancient city of Romagna, and settled down at the court of Guido Novello, who was at that time lord of Ravenna; and here he died, in the year 1321, on the fourteenth day of September, that is on the day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and was buried with great honour by the lord of the city. Now at Ravenna there was a learned Franciscan friar, who was an inquisitor. This man, having heard of Dante's fame, became desirous of making his acquaintance, with the intention of finding out whether he were a heretic or no. And one morning, as Dante was in church, the inquisitor entered, and Dante being pointed out to him, he sent for him. Dante reverentially went to him, and was asked by the inquisitor if he were the Dante who claimed to have visited Hell,

[1] See pp. 193–202 of the Oxford *Dante*.

Purgatory, and Paradise. Dante replied: 'I am Dante Alighieri of Florence.' Whereupon the inquisitor angrily said: 'You go writing canzoni, and sonnets, and idle tales, when you would have done much better to write a learned work, resting on the foundations of the Church of God, instead of giving your time to such like rubbish, which may one of these days serve you out as you deserve.' When Dante wished to reply to the inquisitor, the latter said: 'This is not the time; but on such a day I will see you again, and I will inquire into this matter.' Dante thereupon answered that he should be well pleased for this to be done; and, taking leave of the inquisitor, he went home to his own room, and there and then wrote out the composition known as the 'Little Creed,' the which creed is an affirmation of the whole Christian faith. On the appointed day he went in quest of the inquisitor, and, having found him, put into his hands this composition, which the inquisitor read; and having read it he thought it a remarkable work, insomuch that he was at a loss to know what to say to Dante. And while the inquisitor was thus confounded, Dante took his leave, and so came off safe and sound. And from that day forward Dante and the inquisitor became great friends. And that is how it came about that Dante wrote his Creed."[1]

[1] Quoted by Papanti, *op. cit.* pp. 47–49.

Giovanni Sercambi, the Lucchese novelist, tells several stories of Dante, in one of which he relates how Dante turned the tables on King Robert of Naples, the Guelf champion, who was the bitter opponent of Dante's ideal Emperor, Henry of Luxemburg.

"In the days when King Robert of Naples was still alive, Dante, the poet of Florence, having been forbidden to live in his native city or anywhere within the States of the Church, took refuge sometimes with the Della Scala family at Verona, and sometimes with the lord of Mantua, but oftenest with the Duke of Lucca, namely, Messer Castruccio Castracani. And inasmuch as the fame of the said Dante's wisdom had been noised abroad, King Robert was desirous of having him at his court, in order that he might judge of his wisdom and virtue; wherefore he sent letters to the Duke, and likewise to Dante, begging him to consent to come. And Dante having decided to go to King Robert's court, set out from Lucca and made his way to Naples, where he arrived, dressed, as poets mostly are, in somewhat shabby garments. When his arrival was announced to King Robert, he was sent for to the King; and it was just the hour of dinner as Dante entered the room where the King was. After hands had been washed and places taken at table, the King sitting at his own table, and the barons at theirs, at the

last Dante was placed at the lowest seat of all. Dante, being a wise man, saw at once how little sense the King showed. Nevertheless, being hungry, he ate, and after he had eaten, he, without waiting, took his departure, and set out towards Ancona on his way back to Tuscany. When King Robert had dined, and rested somewhat, he inquired what had become of Dante, and was informed that he had left and was on his way towards Ancona. The King, knowing that he had not paid Dante the honour which was his due, supposed that he was indignant on that account, and said to himself: 'I have done wrong; after sending for him, I ought to have done him honour, and then I should have learned from him what I wanted.' He therefore without delay sent some of his own servants after him, who caught him up before he reached Ancona. Having received the King's letter Dante turned round and went back to Naples; and dressing himself in a very handsome garment presented himself before King Robert. At dinner the King placed him at the head of the first table, which was alongside of his own; and Dante finding himself at the head of the table, resolved to make the King understand what he had done. Accordingly, when the meat and wine were served, Dante took the meat and smeared it over the breast of his dress, and the wine he smeared over his clothes in

like manner. King Robert and the barons who were present, seeing this, said: 'This man must be a good-for-nothing; what does he mean by smearing the wine and gravy over his clothes?' Dante heard how they were abusing him, but held his peace. Then the King, who had observed all that passed, turned to Dante, and said: 'What is this that I have seen you doing? How can you, who are reputed to be so wise, indulge in such nasty habits?' Dante, who had hoped for some remark of this kind, replied: 'Your majesty, I know that this great honour which you now show me, is paid not to me but to my clothes; consequently I thought that my clothes ought to partake of the good things you provided. You must see that what I say is the case; for I am just as wise now, I suppose, as when I was set at the bottom of the table, because of my shabby clothes; and now I have come back, neither more nor less wise than before, because I am well dressed, you place me at the head of the table.' King Robert, recognising that Dante had rebuked him justly, and had spoken the truth, ordered fresh clothes to be brought for him, and Dante after changing his dress ate his dinner, delighted at having made the King see his own folly. When dinner was over, the King took Dante aside, and, making proof of his wisdom, found him to be even wiser than he had been told; wherefore King

Robert paid Dante great honour and kept him at his court, in order that he might have further experience of his wisdom and virtue."

The famous Florentine story-teller, Francesco Poggio Bracciolini, more commonly known as Poggio, besides the two anecdotes of Dante and Can Grande which have already been given, relates the following of how Dante disposed of a bore :—

"At the time when our poet Dante was in exile at Siena, as he was standing one day deep in thought, with his elbow on one of the altars in the Church of the Minor Friars, as though he were revolving in his mind some very abstruse matter, some busybody went up to him, and disturbed him by speaking to him. Dante turned to him and said : 'What is the biggest beast in the world?' 'The elephant,' was the reply. Then said Dante : 'Oh! elephant, leave me alone in peace, for I am pondering weightier matters than your silly chatter.'" [1]

The following anecdote of Dante and the Doge of Venice belongs to quite the end of Dante's life, the occasion in question being when he was in Venice on his embassy from Guido da Polenta in the summer of 1321, a few months before his death :—

"Dante of Florence being once on a mission in Venice, was invited to dinner by the Doge on a

[1] *Facezie di Poggio fiorentino*, No. lxvi.

fast-day. In front of the envoys of the other princes who were of greater account than the Polenta lord of Ravenna, and were served before Dante, were placed the largest fish; while in front of Dante were placed the smallest. This difference of treatment nettled Dante, who took up one of the little fish in his hand, and held it to his ear, as though expecting it to say something. The Doge, observing this, asked him what this strange behaviour meant. To which Dante replied: 'As I knew that the father of this fish met his death in these waters, I was asking him news of his father.' 'Well,' said the Doge, 'and what did he answer?' Dante replied: 'He told me that he and his companions were too little to remember much about him; but that I might learn what I wanted from the older fish, who would be able to give me the news I asked for.' Thereupon the Doge at once ordered Dante to be served with a fine large fish."[1]

Many of these stories are obviously much older than the time of Dante, and have been told of various famous persons at different periods. Their association, however, with Dante's name is sufficient proof of the estimation in which he was held within a few years after his death, and of the way in which his fame as a poet impressed the popular imagination in Italy.

[1] Quoted by Papanti, *op. cit.* p. 157.

DANTE AND HIS BOOK

From the fiture by Domenico di Michelino, in the Duomo at Florence

PART V

DANTE'S WORKS

CHAPTER I

Italian Works — Lyrical Poems — The *Vita Nuova* — The *Convivio*.

DANTE'S earliest known composition is the sonnet beginning

"A ciascun' alma presa e gentil core,"[1]

which, as he tells us in the *Vita Nuova*, he wrote after seeing the marvellous vision which followed

[1] Thus translated by Norton :—

"To every captive soul and gentle heart
Unto whose sight may come the present word,
That they thereof to me their thoughts impart,
Be greeting in Love's name, who is their Lord.
Now of those hours well-nigh one third had gone
What time doth every star appear most bright,
When on a sudden Love before me shone,
Remembrance of whose nature gives me fright.
Joyful to me seemed Love, and he was keeping
My heart within his hands, while on his arm
He held my lady, covered o'er, and sleeping.
Then waking her, he with this flaming heart
Did humbly feed her fearful of some harm.
Thereon I saw him thence in tears depart.

on the episode of his being publicly saluted by Beatrice for the first time in the streets of Florence, when they were both in their eighteenth year (*i.e.* in the year 1283). This sonnet, he further tells us, he sent to many famous poets of the day, from whom he received sonnets in reply. Among those to whom he sent were his first friend, Guido Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoja, and Dante da Majano, whose replies have been preserved.

This sonnet and thirty other poems (twenty-four sonnets, five canzoni, and one ballata) are grouped together in a symmetrical arrangement in the *Vita Nuova* (or *New Life*), the prose text of which is a vehicle for the introduction and interpretation of the poems. Others of Dante's lyrical poems are introduced in his *Convivio* (or *Banquet*), which contains three canzoni, and in his Latin work on the vulgar tongue (*De Vulgari Eloquentia*), which contains quotations from nine poems, canzoni and sextine. In addition to these there is a collection of between ninety and a hundred lyrical poems attributed to Dante, some of which are almost certainly not his. Such of the poems as do not belong to the *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio* appear to have been composed at various times as independent pieces, though attempts have been made to distinguish one or more definite groups.

Dante's *Vita Nuova* or *New Life* (*i.e.*, according to some, his "young life," but more probably his "life made new" by his love for Beatrice) was written probably between 1292 and 1295, when Dante was under thirty, and some seven or eight years before his exile from Florence. The poems were obviously written before the prose text, which was necessarily composed later than the death of Beatrice in 1290.

Boccaccio, who asserts that in later life Dante was ashamed of this work of his youth,[1] gives the following account of the *Vita Nuova*:—

"This glorious poet composed several works in his time, of which I think it fitting to make mention in order, lest any work of his be claimed by another, or the works of others be perchance attributed to him.

"He, first of all, while his tears for the death of Beatrice were yet fresh, when he was nigh upon his twenty-sixth year, collected together in a little volume, to which he gave the title of *Vita Nuova*, certain small works, such as sonnets and canzoni, composed by him in rime at divers times before, and of marvellous beauty. Above each of these, severally and in order, he wrote the occasions which had moved him to compose them; and below he added the divisions of each

[1] This is not borne out by what Dante himself says of it at the beginning of the *Convivio*.

poem. And although in his riper years he was much ashamed of having written this little book, yet, if his age be considered, it is very beautiful and delightful, especially to unlearned folk." [1]

"The *New Life*," writes Professor Norton,[2] "is the proper introduction to the *Divine Comedy*. It is the story of the beginning of the love through which, even in Dante's youth, heavenly things were revealed to him, and which in the bitterest trials of life, — in disappointment, poverty, and exile,—kept his heart fresh with springs of perpetual solace. It was this love which led him through the hard paths of Philosophy and up the steep ascents of Faith, out of Hell and through Purgatory, to the glories of Paradise and the fulfilment of Hope.

"The narrative of the *New Life* is quaint, embroidered with conceits, deficient in artistic completeness, but it has the simplicity of youth, the charm of sincerity, the freedom of personal confidence; and so long as there are lovers in the world, and so long as lovers are poets, this first and tenderest love-story of modern literature will be read with appreciation and responsive sympathy.

"It is the earliest of Dante's writings, and the

[1] *Vita di Dante.*

[2] *The New Life of Dante Alighieri*, pp. 93 ff.

most autobiographic of them in form and intention. In it we are brought into intimate personal relations with the poet. He trusts himself to us with full and free confidence; but there is no derogation from becoming manliness in his confessions. He draws the picture of a portion of his youth, and displays its secret emotions; but he does so with no morbid self-consciousness and with no affectation. Part of this simplicity is due, undoubtedly, to the character of the times, part to his own youthfulness, part to downright faith in his own genius. It was the fashion for poets to tell of their loves; in following this fashion, he not only gave utterance to genuine feeling, and claimed his rank among the poets, but also fixed a standard by which the ideal expression of love was thereafter to be measured.

"This first essay of his poetic powers rests on the foundation upon which his later life was built. The figure of Beatrice, which appears veiled under the symbolism, and indistinct in the bright halo of the allegory of the *Divine Comedy*, takes its place in life and on the earth through the *New Life* as definitely as that of Dante himself. She is no allegorized piece of humanity, no impersonation of attributes, but an actual woman,—beautiful, modest, gentle, with companions only less beautiful than herself,—the most delightful personage in

the daily picturesque life of Florence. She is seen smiling and weeping, walking with other fair maidens in the street, praying at the church, merry at festivals, mourning at funerals; and her smiles and tears, her gentleness, her reserve, all the sweet qualities of her life, and the peace of her death, are told of with such tenderness, and purity, and passion, as well as with such truth of poetic imagination, that she remains, and will always remain, the loveliest and most womanly woman of the Middle Ages,—at once absolutely real and truly ideal.

"The meaning of the name *La Vita Nuova* has been the subject of animated discussion. Literally *The New Life*, it has been questioned whether this phrase meant simply early life, or life made new by the first experience and lasting influence of love. The latter interpretation seems the most appropriate to Dante's turn of mind and to his condition of feeling at the time when the little book appeared. To him it was the record of that life which the presence of Beatrice had made new."

Besides the *Vita Nuova*[1] Dante wrote in Italian prose the philosophical treatise to which he gave the name of *Convivio* or *Banquet*. This work con-

[1] The first printed edition of the *Vita Nuova* appeared at Florence in 1576, more than a hundred years later than the first edition of the *Divina Commedia*.

sists of a philosophical commentary, which Dante left incomplete, on three of his canzoni. According to the original scheme it was to have been a commentary on fourteen canzoni. In its unfinished state the *Convivio* consists of four books, which show a tendency to become more and more prolix as the work proceeds, the fourth book containing thirty chapters, while the first contains only thirteen.

Giovanni Villani in his Florentine chronicle says of this book :—

"Dante commenced a commentary on fourteen of his moral canzoni in the vulgar tongue, which is incomplete, save as regards three of them, in consequence of his death. This commentary, to judge by what we have of it, would have been a lofty, beautiful, subtle, and very great work, inasmuch as it is adorned by lofty style, and fine philosophical and astrological discussions." [1]

Boccaccio says :—

"Dante also composed a commentary in prose in the Florentine vulgar tongue on three of his canzoni at full length ; he appears to have intended, when he began, to write a commentary upon all of them, but whether he afterwards changed his mind, or never had time to carry out his intention, at any rate he did not write the commentary on more than these three. This book, which he

[1] Bk. ix. ch. 136.

entitled *Convivio,* is a very beautiful and praiseworthy little work."

The *Convivio* was written some time after the *Vita Nuova,* but before the *Divina Commedia,* in which Dante sometimes corrects opinions he had expressed in the *Convivio,* such as his theories as to the spots on the moon,[1] and the arrangement of the celestial hierarchies.[2] It was most probably composed between April 1307 and May 1309. It was certainly written after Dante's exile from Florence, as at the beginning of the work there is a most pathetic reference to the miseries he endured during his wanderings as an outcast from his native city.[3] Dante explains in the first book, which is introductory, the meaning of the title, the aim of the work, and the difference between it and the *Vita Nuova*; he himself, he says, as the author, represents the servants at an actual banquet (*convivio*); he then points out that the book is of the nature of a commentary, and is written in a lofty style in order to give it an air of gravity and authority, and to counterbalance the objection of its being in Italian; he next gives his reasons for writing it in the vulgar tongue instead of in Latin, in which respect it differs from other commentaries; he further explains that the commentary stands in

[1] *Conv.* ii. 14; *Par.* ii. 49–148; xxii. 139–141.

[2] *Conv.* ii. 6; *Par.* xxviii. 40–139.

[3] *Conv.* i. 3; see the passage quoted above, pp. 116–117.

the same relation to the canzoni as a servant does to his master; and he concludes by declaring that in this work is made manifest the great excellence of the Italian language—that language which he was destined to bring to the highest degree of perfection in the *Divina Commedia*.[1]

[1] The first printed edition of the *Convivio* appeared at Florence in 1490, eighteen years later than the first edition of the *Divina Commedia*, and eighty-six years before the first edition of the *Vita Nuova*.

CHAPTER II

The *Divina Commedia*—Its origin, subject, and aim—Date of composition—Boccaccio's story of the lost cantos—Why it was written in Italian—Dante and his rimes—Manuscripts and printed editions.

AT the close of the *Vita Nuova* Dante says that "a wonderful vision appeared to me, in which I saw things which made me resolve to speak no more of this blessed one,[1] until I could more worthily treat of her. And to attain to this, I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knows. So that, if it shall please Him through whom all things live, that my life be prolonged for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman." This promise to say of Beatrice what had been said of no other woman Dante fulfilled in the *Divina Commedia*, the central figure of which is Beatrice glorified.

"Several years after the composition of the *Vita Nuova*," says Boccaccio, "Dante, as he looked down from the high places of the government of

[1] *i.e.* Beatrice.

the commonwealth of Florence wherein he was stationed, and observed over a wide prospect, such as is visible from such elevated places, what was the life of men, and what the errors of the common herd, and how few, and how greatly worthy of honour, were those who departed therefrom, and how greatly deserving of confusion those who sided with it, he, condemning the pursuits of such as these and commending his own far above theirs, conceived in his mind a lofty thought, whereby at one and the same time, that is in one and the same work, he purposed, while giving proof of his own powers, to pursue with the heaviest penalties the wicked and vicious, and to honour with the highest rewards the virtuous and worthy, and to lay up eternal glory for himself. And inasmuch as he had preferred poetry to every other pursuit, he resolved to compose a poetical work; and after long meditation beforehand upon what he should write, in his thirty-fifth year he began to devote himself to carrying into effect that upon which he had been meditating, namely, to rebuke and to glorify the lives of men according to their different deserts. And inasmuch as he perceived that the lives of men were of three kinds—namely, the vicious life, the life abandoning vices and making for virtue, and the virtuous life—he divided his work in wonderful wise into three books comprised

in one volume, beginning with the punishment of wickedness and ending with the reward of virtue; and he gave to it the title of *Commedia*. Each of these three books he divided into cantos, and the cantos into stanzas. And he composed this work in rime in the vulgar tongue with so great art, and with such wondrous and beautiful ordering, that never yet has any one been able with justice to find fault with it in any respect. How subtly he exercised the poet's art in this work may be perceived by all such as have been endowed with sufficient understanding for the comprehension of it. But inasmuch as we know that great things cannot be accomplished in a brief space of time, so must we understand that so lofty, so great, and so deeply thought out an undertaking as was this of describing in verses in the vulgar tongue all the various actions of mankind and their deserts, could not possibly have been brought to completion in a short time, especially by a man who was the sport of so many and various chances of fortune, all of them full of anguish and envenomed with bitterness, as we have seen Dante was; he therefore, from the hour when he first set himself to this lofty enterprise down to the last day of his life (notwithstanding that meanwhile he composed several other works) continually laboured upon it."[1]

[1] *Vita di Dante.*

In his letter to Can Grande, in which he dedicates to him the *Paradiso,* Dante gives his own explanation of the subject and aim of the poem, and of the reasons why he called it a comedy.

"The subject of this work," he writes, "must be understood as taken according to the letter, and then as interpreted according to the allegorical meaning. The subject, then, of the whole work, taken according to the letter alone, is simply a consideration of the state of souls after death; for from and around this the action of the whole work turns. But if the work is considered according to its allegorical meaning, the subject is man, liable to the reward or punishment of justice, according as through the freedom of the will he is deserving or undeserving. . . . The aim of the work is to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to guide them to a state of happiness. . . . The title of the book is 'Here beginneth the Comedy[1] of Dante Ali-

[1] The title *Divina Commedia*, as appears from this statement, was not Dante's own. It probably had its origin in Dante's own description of the poem as "lo sacrato poema" (*Par.* xxiii. 62) and "il poema sacro" (*Par.* xxv. 1). It occurs in some of the oldest manuscripts of the poem, and in Boccaccio's *Life of Dante.* The first printed edition bearing this title is the Venice one of 1555; in a previous edition, with the commentary of Landino (Florence, 1481), the epithet "divine" is applied to Dante himself (as it had

ghieri, a Florentine by birth, but not by character.' And for the comprehension of this it must be understood that . . . comedy is a certain kind of poetical narrative which differs from all others. It differs from tragedy in its subject matter,—in this way, that tragedy in its beginning is admirable and quiet, in its ending or catastrophe foul and horrible. . . . Comedy, on the other hand, begins with adverse circumstances, but its theme has a happy termination. . . . Likewise they differ in their style of language, for tragedy is lofty and sublime, comedy lowly and humble. . . . From this it is evident why the present work is called a comedy. For if we consider the theme, in its beginning it is horrible and foul, because it is Hell; in its ending fortunate, desirable, and joyful, because it is Paradise; and if we consider the style of language, the style is lowly and humble, because it is the vulgar tongue, in which even housewives hold converse." [1]

The form of Dante's poem (or vision, as he claims it to have been) is triple, the three divisions corresponding with the three kingdoms of the next world, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.

been by the Florentine Coluccio Salutati eighty years before), but not to the poem. In the earliest printed editions the title is simply "La Commedia di Dante Alighieri."

[1] Trans. by Latham (with modifications).

Each division or cantica contains thirty-three cantos (with an introductory one to the first cantica). The opening canto of the *Inferno* forms an introduction to the whole poem, which thus contains a hundred cantos, the square of the perfect number ten.[1] These contain in all fourteen thousand two hundred and thirty-three lines, namely, four thousand seven hundred and twenty in the *Inferno*, four thousand seven hundred and fifty-five in the *Purgatorio*, and four thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight in the *Paradiso*.

Dante places the date of the action of the poem in the Jubilee year 1300. Thus he describes his vision as having taken place "midway upon the pathway of our life" (*Inferno*, i. 1), that is, in his thirty-fifth year, the days of our life, according to the Psalmist, being "threescore years and ten," and Dante having been born in 1265.

The dates of the completion of the several parts of the poem have not been fixed with any certainty, but the following limitations may be accepted:—The *Inferno* must have been completed after April 20, 1314, the date of the death of Pope Clement v., because of the allusion to that event in the nineteenth canto (ll. 76–87); and not later than 1319, since it is referred to as

[1] Cf. *Vita Nuova*, § 30, ll. 9–10; *Convivio*, ii. 15, ll. 30–36.

finished in a Latin poem addressed to Dante in that year by a Bolognese professor, Giovanni del Virgilio, as well as in Dante's poem in reply. The *Purgatorio* must have been completed not later than 1319, since it is alluded to as finished in the same poems. The *Paradiso* must have been completed after August 7, 1316, the date of the accession of Pope John XXII., since that Pope is alluded to in the twenty-seventh canto (ll. 58–59); its latest limit is fixed by the date of Dante's death, September 14, 1321.

Boccaccio tells a story of how at Dante's death the last thirteen cantos of the *Paradiso* were not to be found, so that it was supposed that he had left his great work unfinished, until the whereabouts of the missing cantos was miraculously revealed to his son, Jacopo, in a vision.

"The friends Dante left behind him, his sons and his disciples, having searched at many times and for several months everything of his writing, to see whether he had left any conclusion to his work, could in nowise find any of the remaining cantos; his friends generally being much mortified that God had not at least lent him so long to the world, that he might have been able to complete the small remaining part of his work; and having sought so long and never found it, they remained in despair. Jacopo and Piero were sons of Dante, and each of them being

rhymers, they were induced by the persuasions of their friends to endeavour to complete, as far as they were able, their father's work, in order that it should not remain imperfect; when to Jacopo, who was more eager about it than his brother, there appeared a wonderful vision, which not only induced him to abandon such presumptuous folly, but showed him where the thirteen cantos were which were wanting to the *Divina Commedia*, and which they had not been able to find.

"A worthy man of Ravenna, whose name was Pier Giardino, and who had long been Dante's disciple, grave in his manner and worthy of credit, relates that after the eighth month from the day of his master's death, there came to his house before dawn Jacopo di Dante, who told him that that night, while he was asleep, his father Dante had appeared to him, clothed in the purest white, and his face resplendent with an extraordinary light; that he, Jacopo, asked him if he lived, and that Dante replied: 'Yes, but in the true life, not our life.' Then he, Jacopo, asked him if he had completed his work before passing into the true life, and, if he had done so, what had become of that part of it which was missing, which they none of them had been able to find. To this Dante seemed to answer: 'Yes, I finished it'; and then took

him, Jacopo, by the hand, and led him into that chamber in which he, Dante, had been accustomed to sleep when he lived in this life, and, touching one of the walls, he said: 'What you have sought for so much is here'; and at these words both Dante and sleep fled from Jacopo at once. For which reason Jacopo said he could not rest without coming to explain what he had seen to Pier Giardino, in order that they should go together and search out the place thus pointed out to him, which he retained excellently in his memory, and to see whether this had been pointed out by a true spirit, or a false delusion. For which purpose, though it was still far in the night, they set off together, and went to the house in which Dante resided at the time of his death. Having called up its present owner, he admitted them, and they went to the place thus pointed out; there they found a mat fixed to the wall, as they had always been used to see it in past days; they lifted it gently up, when they found a little window in the wall, never before seen by any of them, nor did they even know that it was there. In it they found several writings, all mouldy from the dampness of the walls, and had they remained there longer, in a little while they would have crumbled away. Having thoroughly cleared away the mould, they found them to be the thirteen

cantos that had been wanting to complete the *Commedia.*" [1]

The missing cantos, adds Boccaccio, were at once sent to Can Grande della Scala, to whom Dante had been in the habit of sending every few cantos of his poem, as he finished them, in order that Can Grande might see them before they were submitted to any one else.

Boccaccio is responsible for another interesting anecdote [2] about the *Commedia,* which, if we are to accept it as authentic, shows how the Florentines, by exiling Dante, were very near depriving the world of one of its most precious treasures.

"It should be known," he says, "that Dante had a sister, who was married to one of our citizens, called Leon Poggi, by whom she had several children. Among these was one called Andrew, who wonderfully resembled Dante in the outline of his features, and in his height and figure; and he also walked rather stooping, as Dante is said to have done. He was a weak man, but with naturally good feelings, and his language and conduct were regular and praiseworthy. And I having become intimate with him, he often spoke to me of Dante's habits

[1] *Vita di Dante* (trans. by Bunbury).

[2] This story is given both in the *Vita di Dante* and in the *Comento.*

and ways; but among those things which I delight most in recollecting, is what he told me relating to that of which we are now speaking. He said then, that Dante belonged to the party of Messer Vieri de' Cerchi, and was one of its great leaders; and when Messer Vieri and many of his followers left Florence, Dante left that city also and went to Verona. And on account of this departure, through the solicitation of the opposite party, Messer Vieri and all who had left Florence, especially the principal persons, were considered as rebels, and had their persons condemned, and their property confiscated. When the people heard this, they ran to the houses of those proscribed, and plundered all that was within them. It is true that Dante's wife, Madonna Gemma, fearing this, by the advice of some of her friends and relations, had withdrawn from his house some chests containing certain precious things, and Dante's writings along with them, and had put them in a place of safety. And not satisfied with having plundered the houses of the proscribed, the most powerful partisans of the opposite faction occupied their possessions,—some taking one and some another, — and thus Dante's house was occupied.

"But after five years or more had elapsed, and the city was more rationally governed, it is said,

than it was when Dante was sentenced, persons began to question their rights, on different grounds, to what had been the property of the exiles, and they were heard. Therefore Madonna Gemma was advised to demand back Dante's property, on the ground that it was her dowry. She, to prepare this business, required certain writings and documents which were in one of the chests, which, in the violent plunder of effects, she had sent away, nor had she ever since removed them from the place where she had deposited them. For this purpose, this Andrew said, she had sent for him, and, as Dante's nephew, had entrusted him with the keys of these chests, and had sent him with a lawyer to search for the required papers; while the lawyer searched for these, he, Andrew, among other of Dante's writings, found many sonnets, canzoni, and such similar pieces. But among them what pleased him the most was a sheet in which, in Dante's handwriting, the seven first cantos of the *Commedia* were written; and therefore he took it and carried it off with him, and read it over and over again; and although he understood but little of it, still it appeared to him a very fine thing; and therefore he determined, in order to know what it was, to carry it to an esteemed man of our city, who in those times was a much celebrated reciter of verses, whose name was

Dino, the son of Messer Lambertuccio Frescobaldi.

"It pleased Dino marvellously; and having made copies of it for several of his friends, and knowing that the composition was merely begun, and not completed, he thought that it would be best to send it to Dante, and at the same time to beg him to follow up his design, and to finish it. And having inquired, and ascertained that Dante was at this time in the Lunigiana, with a noble man of the name of Malaspina, called the Marquis Moroello, who was a man of understanding, and who had a singular friendship for him, he thought of sending it, not to Dante himself, but to the Marquis, in order that he should show it to him: and so Dino did, begging him that, as far as it lay in his power, he would exert his good offices to induce Dante to continue and finish his work.

"The seven aforesaid cantos having reached the Marquis's hands, and having marvellously pleased him, he showed them to Dante; and having heard from him that they were his composition, he entreated him to continue the work. To this it is said that Dante answered: 'I really supposed that these, along with many of my other writings and effects, were lost when my house was plundered, and therefore I had given up all thoughts of them. But since it has

pleased God that they should not be lost, and He has thus restored them to me, I shall endeavour, as far as I am able, to proceed with them according to my first design.' And recalling his old thoughts, and resuming his interrupted work, he speaks thus in the beginning of the eighth canto: 'My wondrous history I here renew.'"[1]

The question as to why Dante, a man of great learning, chose to write the *Commedia* in Italian, instead of in Latin, exercised the minds of many wise men of his day, Boccaccio tells us. His own opinion on the subject he gives as follows:—

"In reply to this question," he says, "two chief reasons, amongst many others, come to my mind. The first of which is, to be of more general use to his fellow-citizens and other Italians; for he knew that if he had written metrically in Latin as the other poets of past times had done, he would only have done service to men of letters, whereas, writing in the vernacular, he did a deed ne'er done before, and there was no bar in any incapacity of the men of letters to understand him; and by showing the beauty of our idiom and his own excelling art therein, he gave delight and understanding of himself to the unlearned who had hitherto been abandoned of every one. The second reason

[1] *Comento*, ii. 129–132 (trans. by Bunbury).

which moved him thereto was this. Seeing that liberal studies were utterly abandoned, and especially by princes and other great men, to whom poetic toils were wont to be dedicated, wherefore the divine works of Virgil and the other illustrious poets had not only sunk into small esteem, but were well-nigh despised by the most; having himself begun, according as the loftiness of the matter demanded, after this guise—

> 'Ultima regna canam, fluido contermina mundo,
> Spiritibus quae lata patent, quae praemia solvunt
> Pro meritis cuicumque suis,' etc.,[1]

he left it there; for he conceived it was a vain thing to put crusts of bread into the mouths of such as were still sucking milk; wherefore he began his work again in style suited to modern senses, and followed it up in the vernacular." [2]

The skill exhibited by Dante in the management of the rimes in his poem, which consists of considerably over fourteen thousand lines, is very remarkable. According to the author of the commentary known as the *Ottimo Comento*, who was a contemporary of Dante, he boasted that he

[1] "The furthest realms I sing, conterminous with the flowing universe, stretching afar for spirits, paying the rewards to each after his merits," etc.

[2] *Vita di Dante* (trans. by Wicksteed).

had never been trammelled in his composition by the exigencies of rime. "I, the writer," says the commentator, "heard Dante say that never a rime had led him to say other than he would, but that many a time and oft he had made words say in his rimes what they were not wont to express for other poets."

Another commentator, Benvenuto da Imola, in connection with Dante's extraordinary facility in the matter of rimes, repeats a quaint conceit, which had been imagined, he says, by an ardent admirer of the poet: — "When Dante first set about the composition of his poem, all the rimes in the Italian language presented themselves before him in the guise of so many lovely maidens, and each in turn humbly petitioned to be granted admittance into this great work of his genius. In answer to their prayers, Dante called first one and then another, and assigned to each its appropriate place in the poem; so that, when at last the work was complete, it was found that not a single one had been left out."

The statistics as to the editions, manuscript and printed, of the *Divina Commedia* are interesting. The known manuscripts number between five and six hundred, giving an average of about four a year for the 150 years between the date of Dante's death (1321) and that of the first printed edition (1472). None of these dates earlier than

fourteen or fifteen years after Dante's death, of whose original manuscript not a trace has yet been discovered. Of printed editions there are between three and four hundred, giving an average of less than one a year for the 430 years between the date of the first edition (1472) and the latest (1900).[1] The earliest probably is that printed at Foligno in 1472, in which year editions appeared also at Mantua and at Jesi. Two editions were printed at Naples shortly after, one in 1474, the other in 1477. A Venetian edition appeared also in 1477; a Milanese in 1477–78; and a second Venetian in 1478. The first Florentine edition (with the commentary of Cristoforo Landino) did not appear until 1481. At least six other editions were printed in Italy in the fifteenth century. In the next century two editions were printed at the famous Venetian press of Aldus, one in 1502 (in which the well-known Aldine anchor began to be used for the first time), the other in 1515. The first edition printed outside Italy was the counterfeit of the first Aldine, which appeared at Lyons in 1502 or 1503. Three other editions were printed in the

[1] At first sight it might appear as if the popularity of the poem had decreased since the invention of printing; but it must be borne in mind that a manuscript "edition" consisted of *one copy only*, whereas a printed edition may consist of hundreds or even thousands of copies.

sixteenth century at Lyons, viz. in 1547, 1551, and 1571. No other edition appeared outside Italy for nearly two hundred years, till 1768, when an edition was published at Paris. An edition, with the imprint London, but actually printed at Leghorn, appeared in 1778. The first edition of any considerable portion of the Italian text printed in England was that of selections from the sixth canto of the *Inferno*, the eighth of the *Purgatorio*, and the thirty-third of the *Paradiso*, published by Giuseppe Baretti in his *Italian Library* in 1757. Twenty-five years later (in 1782) the first three cantos of the *Inferno* were printed, with a translation in *terza rima*, by Hayley in the notes to the third Epistle, in his *Essay on Epic Poetry*. This was followed by the complete text of the *Inferno*, which accompanied the first issue of Cary's *Hell* published in London in 1805–6. Two complete English editions of the *Commedia* (the first) were printed in London in 1808, and two more were printed in 1819. Other English editions of the whole or part of the poem appeared in 1822–23, 1824, 1826, 1827, 1839, and 1842–43; since when at least a dozen others have been published in England, two of which were issued in the year 1900, the six-hundredth anniversary of Dante's journey through the three kingdoms of the other world.[1]

[1] See Paget Toynbee: *The Earliest Editions of the Divina Commedia printed in England* (in *Athenæum*, 2nd Jan. 1904).

CHAPTER III

Latin Works—The *De Monarchia*—The *De Vulgari Eloquentia*—The Letters—The Eclogues—The *Quaestio de Aqua et Terra.*

IN addition to his Italian works Dante wrote several works in Latin. The most important of these and the best known is the *De Monarchia,* a treatise on monarchy, which has been described as "the creed of Dante's Ghibellinism." Its subject is the relations between the Empire and the Papacy; it is a plea for the necessity of a universal temporal monarchy, coexistent with the spiritual sovereignty of the Pope. The work is divided into three books, in the first of which Dante treats of the necessity of monarchy; in the second he discusses the question how far the Roman people were justified in assuming the functions of monarchy, or the imperial power; in the third he inquires to what extent the function of the monarchy, *i.e.* the Empire, depends immediately upon God.

Both Villani and Boccaccio include the *De*

Monarchia in their lists of Dante's works. The former says briefly: "Dante also composed the *Monarchia*, in which he treated of the function of the Pope and of the Emperors."[1] Boccaccio, on the other hand, speaks of the book at some length, and relates how, soon after Dante's death, it was publicly condemned to be burned by the Papal Legate in Lombardy, who would also have burned Dante's bones if he had not been prevented.

"This illustrious writer also, when the Emperor Henry VII. came into Italy, composed a book in Latin prose, entitled *Monarchia*, which he divided into three books, corresponding to the three questions which he determines in it. In the first book he proves by logical argument that the existence of the Empire is necessary to the well-being of the world; and this is the first question. In the second book, drawing his arguments from history, he shows that Rome of right gained the imperial title; which is the second question. In the third book he proves by theological arguments that the authority of the Empire proceeds direct from God, and not through the medium of any vicar, as the clergy would seem to hold; and this is the third question.

"This book, a few years after the death of the author, was condemned by Messer Beltrando,

[1] Bk. ix. ch. 136

Cardinal of Il Poggetto, and Papal Legate in Lombardy, during the pontificate of John XXII. And the occasion of this was because Lewis, Duke of Bavaria, elected by the German electors King of the Romans, coming to Rome for his coronation, contrary to the wishes of the aforesaid Pope John, when he was in Rome, made a Minor Friar, named Piero della Corvara, Pope, contrary to the ordinances of the Church, and made many cardinals and bishops; and had himself crowned in Rome by this Pope. And when afterwards questions arose in many cases as to his authority, he and his following, having discovered this book, began to make use of many of the arguments it contained, in defence of his authority and of themselves; for which cause the book, which up till then had hardly been known, became very famous. But later, when the said Lewis was gone back to Germany, and his followers, and especially the clerics, had declined and were scattered, the said Cardinal, there being none to oppose him, seized the aforesaid book, and publicly condemned it to the flames, as containing heretical matter. And he strove to deal with the bones of the author after the same fashion, to the eternal infamy and confusion of his memory; but in this he was opposed by a valiant and noble knight of Florence, Pino della Tosa by name, who happened to be then at Bologna, where this matter was under

consideration; and with him was Messer Ostagio da Polenta, both of whom were regarded as influential persons by the aforesaid Cardinal." [1]

Critics are by no means agreed as to the date when the *De Monarchia* was composed. Some hold that Dante wrote it before his exile from Florence; but it was most probably written, as Boccaccio says it was, about the time when the Emperor Henry VII. visited Italy, perhaps in 1311 or 1312.

The book was translated into Italian in the fifteenth century by Marsilio Ficino, the Florentine Platonist. It was first printed in the original Latin at Basle in 1559, in a collection of treatises on subjects connected with the Roman Empire. Several manuscripts of it are in existence, of which three at least were executed in the fourteenth century.

Besides the *De Monarchia* Dante wrote in Latin prose a treatise on the vulgar tongue (*De Vulgari Eloquentia*), which is mentioned among his writings by both Villani and Boccaccio. It consists of a dissertation on the Italian language as a literary tongue, in the course of which Dante passes in review the fourteen dialects of Italy. It also contains a consideration of the metre of the *canzone*, thus forming to a certain extent an "art of poetry." Like the *Convivio*, the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is

[1] *Vita di Dante.*

incomplete. It was originally planned to consist of at least four books; but in its unfinished state it consists of two books only. The first book is introductory; the second breaks off abruptly in the middle of the inquiry as to the structure of the stanza.

The work was certainly written after Dante's exile, but the actual date of its composition is disputed. It is probably earlier than the *De Monarchia*, and some think it was written before the *Convivio*, but there is a strong argument for placing it after the latter in a passage in that work in which Dante speaks of a book which, God willing, he intends to compose upon the vulgar tongue.[1]

The book was first printed at Vicenza in 1529, not in the original Latin, but in an Italian translation by Trissino. The original Latin text was printed about fifty years later (in 1577) at Paris, by Corbinelli, a Florentine, who came to France in the train of Catherine de Medicis. Before the publication of the Latin text the genuineness of the treatise as printed by Trissino in Italian was by no means generally accepted. Only three manuscripts are known, two of which belong to the fourteenth century or beginning of the fifteenth.

Dante wrote several letters in Latin, mostly

[1] *Convivio*, i. 5, ll. 67–69.

political, which have already been mentioned.[1] Not all his letters have been preserved; several are referred to by his biographers, of which nothing further is now known. He also wrote two Eclogues, in Latin hexameters, addressed to Giovanni del Virgilio, a professor at Bologna, who had urged Dante to write poetical compositions in Latin, and had invited him to come to Bologna to receive the laurel crown. These Eclogues were written during the last three years of Dante's life, between 1318 and 1321.[2] "Two Eclogues of great beauty" (as well as "many prose Epistles in Latin") are mentioned by Boccaccio among Dante's works, and, though some critics reject them as spurious, there seems no sufficient reason for questioning their authenticity.

The case is otherwise with the short physical treatise known as the *Quaestio de Aqua et Terra*, which until quite recently was held by the majority of professed Dantists to be an undoubted forgery. This work, which is very brief, purports to be a scientific inquiry as to the relative levels of land and water on the surface of the globe; it claims, in fact, to be a report, written by Dante's own hand, of a public disputation held by him at

[1] See above, pp. 119–127. Such as we possess were mostly discovered in the last century by the exertions of Dr. Witte.

[2] See above, p. 128.

Verona on Sunday, January 20, 1320, wherein he determined the question, which had previously been propounded in his presence at Mantua, in favour of the theory that the surface of the earth is everywhere higher than that of the water.

The treatise was first published at Venice in 1508,[1] by one Moncetti, who professed to have printed it from a manuscript copy, with corrections of his own. Unfortunately he never produced the manuscript, of which nothing more has ever been heard. In spite, however, of the suspicious circumstances attending its publication, and of the fact that no such work is mentioned by any of Dante's biographers or commentators, it is difficult to believe that it could have been written by any one but Dante. The internal evidence in favour of its authenticity is overwhelmingly strong; while there seems no adequate motive for a falsification of this kind at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the literary forger found a more promising field in the imitation of classical works. The latest writer on the subject, Dr. E. Moore, who has gone very carefully into the

[1] Only six copies are known of the *editio princeps*; one is in the British Museum, another is in the Cornell University Library (Fiske Collection) in America; the remaining four are in various public libraries in Italy. The work was reprinted at Naples in 1576, but this edition is also exceedingly rare

whole matter, unhesitatingly believes it to be a genuine work of Dante, "corrupted possibly in some of its details, but still in all essential points the production of the same mind and pen to which we owe the *Divina Commedia*, the *De Monarchia*, and the *Convivio*."[1]

[1] *Studies in Dante*, ii. 356.

APPENDIX

Bibliographical Note of the earliest Biographies and Biographical Notices of Dante

1. Giovanni Villani (*d.* 1348): in his *Cronica* or *Istorie de' suoi tempi* (ix. 135[1]); first printed at Venice, 1537. [English translation by P. H. Wicksteed (Hull, 1898)].
2. Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375): *Vita di Dante*[2]; first printed at Venice, 1477 (prefixed to the edition of the *Divina Commedia*, published by Vindelin da Spira). [English translation by J. R. Smith (New York, 1901); selected passages, by P. H. Wicksteed (Hull, 1898)].
3. Antonio Pucci (*circ.* 1310–*circ.* 1390): in his *Centiloquio* in *terza rima* (cap. 55) (written in 1373); first printed at Florence, 1772–1775 (in vols. iii.-vi. of *Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, published by Padre Ildefonso da San Luigi).

[1] In modern editions of Villani this chapter is numbered 136.

[2] Boccaccio's *Vita di Dante* exists in two forms, one of which, commonly known as the *Compendio*, is shorter than the other. The latest writer on the subject (E. Rostagno: *La Vita di Dante, Testo del così detto Compendio attribuito a Giovanni Boccaccio*. Bologna, 1899) argues, with much probability, that the so-called *Compendio* is Boccaccio's first draft of his work.

4. Benvenuto da Imola (*circ.* 1338–1390): in Latin, prefixed to his Commentary on the *Divina Commedia*; first printed at Florence, 1887.
5. Filippo Villani (*d.* 1404): in Latin, in his *Liber de Civitatis Florentiæ famosis Civibus* (ii. § 2); first printed at Florence, 1826.
6. Francesco da Buti (1324–1406): prefixed to his Commentary on the *Divina Commedia*; first printed at Pisa, 1858.
7. Domenico di Bandino (*circ.* 1340–*circ.* 1414): in Latin, in Book v. of his *Fons memorabilium Universi*[1] (completed about 1412); not printed.
8. Simone Serdini da Siena (otherwise known as Il Saviozzo) (*circ.* 1360–*circ.* 1419): biographical details in his poem in *terza rima* on the *Divina Commedia* (written in 1404)[2]; first printed at Paris, 1577 (in the *editio princeps* of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, edited by Jacopo Corbinelli).
9. Giovanni dei Bertoldi (otherwise known as Giovanni da Serravalle): in Latin, prefixed to his Commentary on the *Divina Commedia* (completed January 16, 1417)[3]; first printed at Prato, 1891.

[1] See Tiraboschi: *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vi. Pte. 2, pp. 1141–1145 (ed. Milan, 1824).

[2] See Carlo del Balzo: *Poesie di mille Autori intorno a Dante Alighieri*, iii. 224–241, (Rome, 1891); and Moore: *Dante and his early Biographers*, pp. 88 n. 3, 113–115.

[3] See Moore: *op. cit.*, pp. 110–113. Of this work but three MSS. are known, only two of which are complete; one of these is in the British Museum, the other being in the Vatican Library.

10. Leonardo Bruni (otherwise known as Leonardo Aretino) (1369–1444): *Vita di Dante*; first printed at Perugia, 1671; and at Florence, 1672. [English translations by P. H. Wicksteed (Hull, 1898); and J. R. Smith (New York, 1901)].
11. Sant' Antonino (1389–1459; Archbishop of Florence, 1446): in Latin, in his *Opus Historiale*: first printed at Nuremberg, 1484.[1]
12. Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459): in Latin, *Vita Dantis*; first printed at Florence, 1747.
13. Secco Polentone (*d. circ.* 1463): in Latin, in his *De Scriptoribus illustribus latinæ linguæ*[2]; first printed at Florence, 1747 (by Mehus in his edition of Manetti's lives of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio).
14. Giovanni Mario Filelfo (1426–1480): in Latin, *Vita Dantis*; first printed at Florence, 1828.
15. Cristoforo Landino (1434–1504): prefixed to his Commentary on the *Divina Commedia*; first printed at Florence, 1481.
16. Jacopo Filippo Foresti (commonly known as Filippo da Bergamo) (1434–1520): in Latin, in his *Supplementum Chronicorum orbis ab initio mundi usque ad annum* 1482[3]; first printed at Venice, 1483.

[1] Tiraboschi mentions an edition of Venice, 1480; but this is unknown to Hain, Brunet, and Proctor.

[2] See Tiraboschi: *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, VI. Pte. 2, pp. 1145–1147 (ed. Milan, 1824).

[3] The text of this notice is printed in the *Modern Quarterly of Language and Literature* for March 1898 (p. 52), where reference is made to an article in the *Historisches Jahrbuch* by

17. Hartmann Schedel (*d. circ.* 1500); in Latin, in his *Liber Chronicarum*[1] (the famous *Nuremberg Chronicle*, the printing of which was completed under the author's supervision on July 12, 1493); first printed at Nuremberg, 1493.
18. Anonymous Notice, in Latin, in the Supplement to the first Venice edition (September 5, 1494) of the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais.[2]
19. Rafaello Maffei di Volterra (commonly known as Rafaello Volteranno) (1451–1522): in Latin,[3] in his *Commentariorum Urbanorum Libri*, xxxviii.; first printed at Rome, 1506.
20. Paolo Giovio (1485–1552): in Latin, in his *Elogia Virorum literis illustrium*; first printed at Florence, 1549.
21. Daniello Bernardino da Lucca (*d. circ.* 1560): prefixed to his commentary on the *Div. Commedia*; first printed at Venice, 1568.
22. Alessandro Vellutello (*circ.* 1519–*circ.* 1590): prefixed to his Commentary on the *Div. Commedia*; first printed at Venice, 1544.

Prof. Grauert, who shows that the *Speculum* notice (No. 18) was borrowed from that in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (No. 17), and that that was borrowed from the notice in the *Supplementum* of Filippo da Bergamo, which in its turn was based on two passages in the *De Genealogia Deorum* of Boccaccio.

[1] See p. 231, note 3.

[2] See Paget Toynbee: *A Biographical Notice of Dante in the* 1494 *edition of the Speculum Historiale* (in *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, April 1895); and supplementary article on the same subject, by the same, in *Mod. Quart. Lang. Lit.*, March 1898 (see p. 231, note 3).

[3] See Père Hardouin: *Dontes sur l'âge du Dante*, pp. 25–26 (ed. Paris, 1847); and Tiraboschi: *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vii. p. 1166.

23. Francesco Bocchi (1548–1618): in Latin, in his *Elogia Florentinorum Doctrinis Insignium* (i. § 20); first printed at Florence, 1609.

Of the above, only five are professedly biographies of Dante, namely, the lives by Boccaccio, Filippo Villani, Bruni, Manetti, and Filelfo. Of these but two are easily accessible to the ordinary reader: Boccaccio's, which is prefixed to the edition of his *Comento*, edited by Gaetano Milanesi, and published at Florence by Le Monnier in 1863[1]; and Bruni's, which is prefixed to Brunone Bianchi's edition of the *Divina Commedia* (seventh ed., Florence, 1883). The lives of Filippo Villani and Manetti (as also that by Bruni) are to be found in the somewhat rare folio volume published at Florence in 1847 by G. Mazzoni, under the title, *Philippi Villani · Liber · De Civitatis Florentiæ · Famosis Civibus · Ex Codice Mediceo Laurentiano · Nunc primum editus · Et de Florentinorum Litteratura · Principes · Fere Synchroni Scriptores · Denuo in lucem prodeunt · Cura et Studio · Gustavi Camilli Galletti · Florentini J. C. ·* The life by Filelfo is to be found only in the rare volume published at Florence in 1828 by Magheri, with the title *Vita · Dantis Alighierii · A · J. Mario Philelpho · Scripta · Nunc primum ex Codice Laurentiano · In lucem edita · Et · Notis illustrata.*

Information as to the credibility and sources of the various lives and notices will be found in *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* (vol. v.), by Adolfo Bartoli (Florence, 1884); *Dante and his early*

[1] Critical edition by F. Macrì-Leone, Florence, 1888; and of the *Compendio*, by E. Rostagno, Bologna, 1899.

Biographers, by Edward Moore (London, 1890); *Studi Danteschi,* by Vittorio Imbriani (Florence, 1891); and *Alcuni Capitoli della Biografia di Dante,* by Michele Scherillo (Turin, 1896).

In addition to these, the reader may be referred to the *Vita di Dante* of Count Cesare Balbo (first published at Turin in 1839; reissued at Florence by Le Monnier, with additional notes by Emmanuele Rocco, in 1853), of which an English translation, with modifications and additions, by F. J. Bunbury, was published in London in two volumes in 1852; the *Vita di Dante* of Melchior Missirini (published at Florence in 1840); the *Storia della Vita di Dante* by Pietro Fraticelli (first published at Florence in 1861), which is based upon the *Memorie per servire alla vita di Dante,* collected by Giuseppe Pelli (second and enlarged edition published at Florence in 1823); the *Companion to Dante* (London, 1893) of G. A. Scartazzini, which is a translation (with modifications, by A. J. Butler) of the same author's *Dante-Handbuch* (Leipzig, 1892), which in its turn is a *rifacimento* of the author's own *Prolegomeni della Divina Commedia* (Leipzig, 1890); and, lastly, to the first part of Prof. N. Zingarelli's exhaustive volume upon Dante in the *Storia Letteraria d'Italia* (Milan, 1903).

References to numerous other works (many of them by English writers), including the valuable monographs by Professor Del Lungo, will be found in the bibliographical sections[1] of the above-mentioned works of Scartazzini, as well as, under various headings, in the same writer's *Enciclopedia Dantesca.*

[1] Omitted from the English edition.

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